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ABSTRACT

This volume reports the major findings and tabulated statistics of the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Polls of the Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools for a 20-year period, beginning with the first poll in 1969 and ending with the 1988 poll. Each of the Gallup Organization's 20 annual reports is the basis of a chapter in the book, and each chapter contains some of the questions and responses of the respective year's polls. As a result of this organization, the book also serves as a history of education in the period. Each chapter is preceded by an essay based on feature articles entitled "The Year's Ten Most Important Education Events," produced each year by Ben Brodinsky for the Educational Press Association of America. Certain questions were asked repeatedly in the 20-year period, providing a database of information. Each year a sample of between 1,505 and 2,118 adults in the United States of voting age, in all parts of the country and all types of neighborhoods, has been polled. In 1970, 1971, and 1974, between 250 and 299 high school juniors and seniors were also interviewed. In 1972 and 1973, 270 educators and 306 educators, respectively, were interviewed. Starting from a high of 44% in 1969, the percentage of respondents with children in public school dwindled gradually until reaching an average of about 28% for the past 11 years; however, it went up to 31% in 1987. The percentage of respondents with children in non-public schools has been fairly constant, generally 5% to 8%. Together, the polls show that increased public familiarity with the schools results in increased public respect. Educators must make sure that the public understands what the schools can do best with the resources that are available to them. Appendix 1 explains the sampling and research procedures of the polls. Appendix 2 describes the Polling Attitudes of the Community on Education (PACE) program, which assists communities in conducting local polls. Appendix 3 describes differences between educators and the public on questions of educational policy. (SLD)

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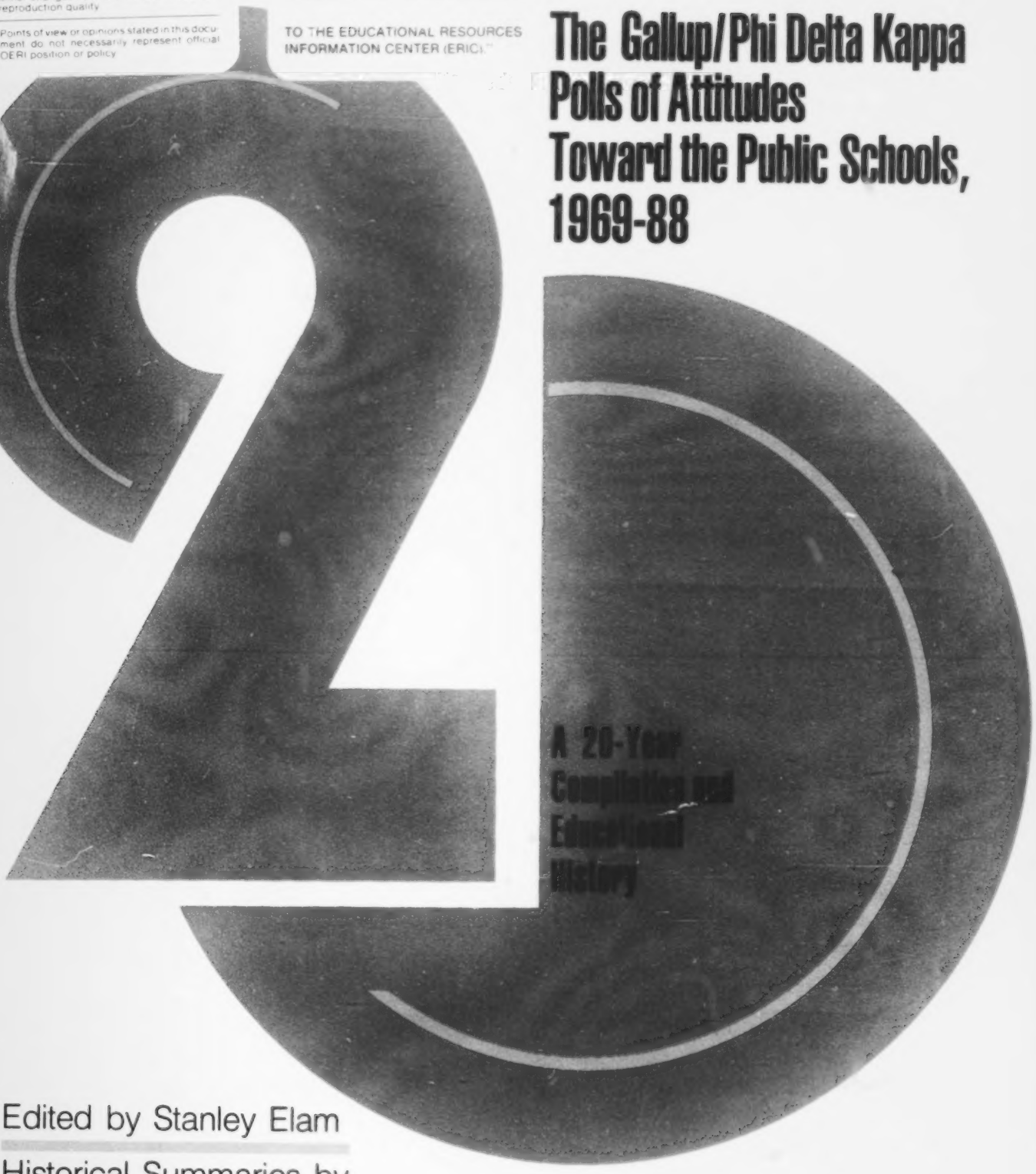

Edited by Stanley Elam

Historical Summaries by
Ben Brodinsky

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A 20-Year Compilation and Educational History

Edited by Stanley Elam

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Introduction

This volume does double duty.

First, it reports major findings of the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Polls of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools for a 20-year period, beginning with the first poll in 1969 and ending with the 1988 poll. I have streamlined the Gallup Organization's annual reports, which were published with only minor deletions in the *Phi Delta Kappan* each September, and have occasionally added explanatory or analytical notes. Each of the 20 Gallup reports is the basis of a chapter in this book.

Second, the volume serves as a brief history of education for a period of considerable social tumult and change. I felt that readers would gain a better understanding of public attitudes reported for each year if the education events that helped shape those attitudes could be reported simultaneously. For this task, I was able to enlist the help of Ben Brodinsky, a distinguished education author and editor, and a long-time friend.

During most of the years covered by the Gallup polls, during which he served as editor of a newsletter published by the Educational Press Association of America, Ben produced a feature called "The Year's Ten Most Important Education Events." (Sometimes there were 20.) EDPRESS members used to look forward to its distribution as a "bonus item" with their *EDPRESS Newsletter* each December. The feature helped them keep abreast of national news and trends in education, and some of them (including myself) cribbed shamelessly from it. Fortunately, Ben has kept a complete file of his "ten most important events," and that file was the basis for essays that precede each poll report in the last 20 chapters of this volume.

It is appropriate in these introductory notes to provide a brief history of the poll itself. It was the brainchild of two young Denver-based foundation executives, Charles F. Kettering II (grandson of the legendary inventor, auto tycoon, and one-time country schoolteacher Charles F. Kettering I) and Edward A. Brainard (a former director of research and evaluation for the schools of Jefferson County near Denver). While serving on the board of the Kettering Foundation of Dayton, Ohio, young Kettering became dissatisfied with the foundation's policies. Using his own assets, he established a new foundation, CFK Ltd. He hired Brainard, then director of the grants division of the Kettering Foundation, to serve as president of CFK Ltd., with offices in Denver.

The two men worked well together. Both were deeply interested in education. A social studies graduate from Dartmouth, Kettering had earned a master's degree in secondary school counseling and guidance at Denver University. Brainard, while at the Kettering Foundation, had seen to it that nearly $70,000 of the foundation's money went to Phi Delta Kappa in 1966 to set up a new research division at the fraternity's Bloomington, Indiana, headquarters. CFK Ltd.'s first projects were focused on school improvement.

At one of the new foundation's planning sessions, Brainard suggested that they ask the late George Gallup Sr., then a member of the Kettering Foundation Board of Trustees, what he thought of the idea of an annual education poll. Kettering liked the idea – and, as it turned out, so did Gallup. A professor at the University of Iowa before pioneering scientific polling in the 1930s, Gallup came from a family of teachers. He quoted a ridiculously low figure for conducting a poll, and the first one was taken in April 1969.

Unfortunately, Charles Kettering II did not live to see the annual education poll become a national institution. He died in a tragic accident in December 1971, shortly after celebrating his fortieth birthday. CFK Ltd. was discontinued two and one-half years later.

For a time, it looked as if the poll might expire for lack of funds. But Brainard and B. Frank Brown, the innovative Florida educator then directing the Institute for Development of Educational Activities (/I/D/E/A/) for the Kettering Foundation, were determined to save it. Brainard went to the Ford Foundation and obtained funding for one year. The next year the Kettering Foundation offered to pick up the tab and continued doing so until 1980, when declining income forced retrenchment. At this point Phi Delta Kappa, with a grant from the Lilly Endowment, stepped in as sponsor as well as publisher. For the first time, Phi Delta Kappa began bearing the full cost of the poll in 1983.

My own involvement with the poll began in 1969, when as *Kappan* editor I summarized findings of the first poll for the November 1969 issue. Shortly thereafter, Brainard asked whether Phi Delta Kappa would be interested in initial publication of the entire text of the next survey. He felt that the poll was not getting sufficient exposure among educators through publication in the small-circulation */I/D/E/A/ Reporter* edited by Brown. We welcomed the idea at Phi Delta Kappa, where the *Kappan* then had a circulation of about 80,000 (it is now 142,000). The poll has been published in the September *Kappan* ever since. Beginning in 1970, I served regularly on the panel that considered poll question and framed new ones. When PDK began sponsoring the poll in 1980, I succeeded Brown as its coordinator.

Preparation for the next year's PDK/Gallup education survey usually begins in November, when a large number of Phi Delta Kappans are invited to submit ideas for questions. The ideas are then refined, combined, compiled, and classified. For several years this list – sometimes as many as three to four hundred questions and topics – went to a panel typically composed of school administrators, teachers, board members, parents, government officials, and others with a strong interest in education. The group would gather at some central location to discuss the question ideas with George Gallup Sr. and others from the Gallup Organization. These discussions gave Gallup a good understanding of the chief concerns of education leaders, and he would offer a short list of questions to a smaller committee for final consideration. The Gallup Organization usually field-tested a list of 35 to 40 questions before sending them to interviewers in April or May.

George Gallup Sr. died on 27 July 1984, shortly after completing work on the 16th annual education poll. Because the education poll was one of his favorite projects, Gallup always wrote the reports himself. Once he did it while recovering from a painful accident, with his leg in a cast. Since George Sr.'s death, his son Alec has written the poll reports, sometimes in collaboration with another author. (In 1987 the collaborator was David L. Clark; this year it was I.) We have tried out some new methods of devising and judging questions. But the essential purposes of the poll remain unchanged. As expressed by Edward Brainard, now assistant superintendent of schools in Aurora, Colorado:

> The original purpose was to obtain information for public school educators – information that would help them better serve their students and their communities. . . . Many school districts have used poll questions to conduct local surveys, sometimes comparing their findings with the national data. Phi Delta Kappa has published excellent materials to show districts how to do this.
>
> In more recent years the surveys have had wider visibility. Of course, they continue to be used by educators for school improvement, but they are also being used by others for other purposes. The original intent remains important, and I hope the poll sponsors continue to keep it uppermost in their minds.

I believe they have done so, and this volume is intended to further the original purpose of the polls. We at Phi Delta Kappa believe that the information the polls provide with respect to public attitudes on significant education questions and issues will enable educators, as well as legislators and board of education members, to make better policy decisions than they might otherwise make.

Stanley Elam
15 August 1988

Chapter 1
Major Findings of the First 20 Polls

One of the prime functions of the Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa Polls of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools is to identify and report national trends in public opinion on questions and issues of interest to education policy makers. Because certain questions have been asked repeatedly in this 20-year series, we now have a database that allows education leaders to study opinion trends and relate them to political, social, cultural, and economic events of the recent past.

The first part of this chapter focuses on public reactions to three questions of special interest to policy makers. In each case, the question has been asked repeatedly in the annual poll, so that trend lines are firmly established.

Let me start with a caveat, one that George Gallup Sr. often took pains to express: The figures presented in these poll reports are relatively accurate for the *nation as a whole* at the time of polling. Local opinions may be similar to national opinions or they may be wholly at variance with them. For this reason, persons considering local policy changes with public attitude components should consider taking their own local polls. Phi Delta Kappa leaders have long been aware of this crucial point. They therefore developed a package of materials that make it possible for persons with no experience in scientific polling to secure valid results from local, area, or state surveys. A brief description of these materials, called *PACE* (Polling Attitudes of the Community on Education), with instructions for obtaining them, appears in Appendix II of this volume.

Another emphasis of this chapter is examination of public attitudes toward new ideas in education or the revival and extension of old ones. Are policy makers too timid about the introduction of innovations because they fear public disapproval? The summary of findings on some 40 questions related to change in the schools will surprise some observers.

Finally, in this chapter I shall describe what I regard as three major lessons of the poll for education policy makers. For public education in America to flourish – indeed, if it is to survive as a vital instrument of success for the people of a democratic state – we will have to apply these lessons with increasing skill and determination.

Benchmark Question I: Public Perceptions of School Problems

We start with the only question that has been asked in all 20 polls: What do you think are the biggest problems with which the public schools of this community must deal? The chart below summarizes answers to this question for the 1969-1988 period. More complete reports of the findings of each poll appear in subsequent chapters of this book.

While it is difficult to tabulate the answers to an open-ended question of this kind – and no summary does them full justice – there are very good reasons for using this question. Chief among these reasons is the fact that respondents' true feelings leap to the surface, uncontaminated by the views of people (chiefly educators) who devise poll questions. Uninformed, superficial, and unsophisticated though the answers may be, they constitute the opinion reality with which school people must deal.

Consider, for example, the "problem" that has been mentioned most often in 16 of the first 20 polls: discipline. Educators themselves, in several polls asking them the same question, hardly mention discipline, which they generally regard as symptomatic of more basic problems. Educators tend to see the "problems" in Gallup's list as a mosaic of sometimes direct, sometimes intricate interrelationships of cause and effect. For example, "difficulty of getting good teachers" is directly related to "lack of financial support" and less directly but definitely related to "overcrowding," "parents' lack of interest," and "lack of support for teachers."

Poll planners have developed a series of questions that probe the public's concept of discipline as a school problem. The first of these, asked in 1973 and 1982, was: "When we talk about 'discipline,' just what does this mean to you?" Most of the respondents said discipline is a matter of obeying rules; respecting views of parents, teachers, and others in authority; and being considerate of fellow students who wish to learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Gallup observed, "While law and order have become almost code words for the conservative viewpoint in politics, the basic concept is held in high regard by the public. In fact, in the 1972 survey, when asked to choose from a list of nine goals of education, the public placed 'teaching students to respect law and authority' as its top goal for students in grades 7-12."

It is important to note that few people blame the schools directly for student behavior problems (although in 1969, 1970, and 1971 nearly half of them expressed the view that educators should be more strict in imposing discipline). A 1983 question asked respondents to identify "best explanations" for disciplinary problems in the schools. "Lack of discipline in the home" (72%) and "lack of respect for law and authority throughout society" (54%) led the list. "Punishment is too lenient" was a distant seventh with 39%. (For details, see Chapter 16.)

Since 1986 another behavior problem – another law-and-order crisis, if you will – has replaced discipline as the number-one public school problem in public perception. It is the use of illicit drugs by students. Ironically, overall drug use by high school youths is in gradual decline, according

to the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research. Increasing alarm over a declining problem is a conundrum beyond the scope of this analysis.

In interpreting the tables that appear in this chapter and later, it is well to remember that a change of one percentage point, assuming that the survey sample is representative, means a change of attitude or opinion by at least 1½ million persons. Changes of only a few percentage points may seem trivial until they are translated into numbers of people. Then they may be startling.

Table I
Items Most Frequently Cited as Biggest Problems in Local Public Schools (In Percentages)

1969		1970	
1. Discipline	26	1. Discipline	18
2. Facilities	22	2. Integration	17
3. Teachers	17	3. Finances	17
4. Finances	14	4. Teachers	12
5. Integration	13	5. Facilities	11
		6. Drugs	11
1971		**1972**	
1. Finances	23	1. Discipline	23
2. Integration	21	2. Finances	19
3. Discipline	14	3. Integration	18
4. Facilities	13	4. Teachers	14
5. Drugs	12	5. Facilities	5
6. Teachers	6		
1973		**1974**	
1. Discipline	22	1. Discipline	23
2. Integration	18	2. Integration	16
3. Finances	16	3. Finances	13
4. Teachers	13	4. Drugs	13
5. Drugs	10	5. Teachers	11
1975		**1976**	
1. Discipline	23	1. Discipline	22
2. Integration/busing*	15	2. Integration/busing	15
3. Finances	14	3. Finances	14
4. Teachers	11	4. Poor curriculum	14
5. Size of school/ classes	10	5. Drugs	11
6. Drugs	9	6. Teachers	11
1977		**1978**	
1. Discipline	26	1. Discipline	25
2. Integration/busing	13	2. Drugs**	13
3. Finances	12	3. Finances	13
4. Teachers	11	4. Integration/busing	13
5. Curriculum	10	5. Curriculum/ standards†	12
6. Drugs	7	6. Teachers	9
1979		**1980**	
1. Discipline	24	1. Discipline	26
2. Drugs	13	2. Drugs	14
3. Finances	12	3. Curriculum/ standards	11
4. Curriculum/ standards	11	4. Finances	10
5. Teachers	10	5. Integration/busing	10
6. Integration/busing	9	6. Size of school/ classes	7
		7. Teachers‡	6
1981		**1982**	
1. Discipline	23	1. Discipline	27
2. Drugs	15	2. Finances	22
3. Curriculum/ standards	14	3. Drugs	20
4. Finances	12	4. Curriculum/ standards	11
5. Teachers	11	5. Teachers	10
6. Integration/busing	11	6. Teachers' lack of interest	7
1983		**1984**	
1. Discipline	25	1. Discipline	27
2. Drugs	18	2. Drugs	18
3. Curriculum/ standards	14	3. Curriculum/ standards	15
4. Finances	13	4. Finances	14
5. Teachers	8	5. Teachers	14
6. Teachers' lack of interest	8	6. Teachers' lack of interest	5
1985		**1986**	
1. Discipline	25	1. Drugs	28
2. Drugs	18	2. Discipline	24
3. Curriculum/ standards	11	3. Finances	11
4. Teachers	10	4. Curriculum/ standards	8
5. Finances	9	5. Teachers	6
1987		**1988**	
1. Drugs	30	1. Drugs	32
2. Discipline	22	2. Discipline	19
3. Finances	14	3. Finances	12
4. Teachers	9	4. Teachers	11
5. Curriculum/ standards	8	5. Curriculum/ standards	11
6. Large schools/ overcrowding	8	6. Pupils' lack of interest	7

*"Forced busing for racial integration" became a focus of concern in this and following years.

**"Alcohol" began to be listed as a separate problem in 1978, with mention by 1 to 3%.

†"Poor standards" was added to "poor curriculum" in 1978.

‡If one adds "teachers' lack of interest" to "difficulty of getting good teachers," this category ranks third with 12%.

Table I suggests considerable stability in the public's perceptions of the major problems in their local schools. Only those problems that have been mentioned by at least 10% of respondents in at least one annual poll are reported in this table. (The one exception is "teachers' lack of interest," which reaches the 10% level when added to "teachers," shorthand for "difficulty of getting good teachers"). The same problem areas tend to appear in about the same sequence every year. The high point for the leading problem, "lack of discipline," came in 1982, when 27% of all respondents noted it. That figure is not greatly different from the low point reached in 1976: 22%. An exception to this general stability can be found in the public's perception of racial desegregation as a problem for the schools (combined with busing for desegregation after 1975), which trended downward from a high of 17% in 1970 to a low of 4% in 1988 (see Chapter 21). What does this mean? Certainly not that schools are now successfully integrated by race or even that controversy over

busing for desegregation has disappeared. Perhaps it only means, as I speculated in "Impressions of a Poll Watcher" (*Phi Delta Kappan*, September 1983), that early hopes for the schools as society's best tool for integrating the races have largely evaporated.

Benchmark Question 2: The People Rate Their Schools

In 1969, 42% of education survey respondents admitted that they knew "very little" about their local public schools. Only 18% claimed to know "quite a lot."* When a similar question was asked 18 years later (1987), the response was almost identical. Numerous poll questions have confirmed these self-evaluations. For example, in 1979 people were asked if they knew how much it cost to educate a child for one year in their local public schools. Only 12% thought they knew or ventured a guess; and of these, 85% were wildly wrong (see Chapter 12). From such data we can infer that perhaps 1% of the public has accurate, detailed information of the kind that should undergird judgments about the schools.

In view of these facts, why ask people to grade their schools on the typical school scale of A to F? How can you give a grade if you know very little about the thing you are grading? The answer, of course, is that you *can't* give an intelligent or informed grade. But this does not deter people from assessing the schools and making judgments. On the average, less than 18% of Gallup survey respondents refuse to grade the schools, locally or nationally. And public perceptions matter, faulty as they may be; educators and school policy makers must bear them in mind, seek to understand their origins, and use them in policy decisions.

The ratings question serves as a national barometer, telling us about fluctuations in approval of the public school system as a whole. These fluctuations have been considerable, as Table II shows. Ratings were comparatively high in 1974, then comparatively low in 1983, when the survey was made just after publication of *A Nation at Risk*. (The media made much of such report phrases as a "rising tide of mediocrity" in American education.) Since 1984 ratings have stabilized near 1970s levels.

*And this 18% undoubtedly includes most educator respondents, who make up some 2% of the U.S. adult population.

Table II
Public School Ratings

"Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools, themselves, in this community were graded in the same way. What grade would you give: the public schools *here* . . . the public schools *nationally*." (National ratings were begun in 1981.)

	1974 Local	1975 Local	1976 Local	1977 Local	1978 Local	1979 Local	1980 Local
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A	18	13	13	11	9	8	10
B	30	30	29	26	27	26	25
C	21	28	28	28	30	30	29
D	6	9	10	11	11	11	12
FAIL	5	7	6	5	8	7	6
DK	20	13	14	19	15	18	18

	1981		1982		1983		1984	
	Local	National	Local	National	Local	National	Local	National
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A	9	2	8	2	6	2	10	2
B	27	18	29	20	25	17	32	23
C	34	43	33	44	32	38	35	49
D	13	15	14	15	13	16	11	11
FAIL	7	6	5	4	7	6	4	4
DK	10	16	11	15	17	21	8	11

	1985		1986		1987		1988	
	Local	National	Local	National	Local	National	Local	National
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A	9	3	11	3	12	4	9	3
B	34	24	30	25	31	22	31	20
C	30	43	28	41	30	44	34	48
D	10	12	11	10	9	11	10	13
FAIL	4	3	5	5	4	2	4	3
DK	13	15	15	16	14	17	12	13

Without some understanding of historical context and demographics, it is easy to misinterpret survey findings of this sort. Let us examine in greater detail the decrease in public approval of local schools between the peak in 1974 and the low in 1983. First, convert the A-F scale to a numerical one, with A equalling 4; B, 3; C, 2; D, 1; and F, -1. Then calculate the average 1974 rating. It turns out to be 2.63, or B-. The same figure for 1983 was 1.72, or C-. Expressed in percentages, this was a horrendous 35% drop in approval. Now look at the demographics. Between 1974 and 1983, the percent of Americans with children in school fell from 39% to 27%. Gallup's 1974 sample included 770 parents, whereas the 1983 sample included only 416. All of the polls confirm that parents with children in public school give their local public schools considerably higher ratings than do nonparents. The decrease in parent ratings between 1974 and 1983 was from 2.61 to 2.15; nonparent ratings went from 2.54 to a dismal 1.50. Had the percentage of parents been the same in the two years we are comparing, the overall approval rate would obviously have fallen much less precipitously. As children of the baby-boom generation swell the nation's elementary schools, ratings will probably rise.

Gallup was at pains to point out in most of his annual reports that persons with the best access to firsthand information about the public schools (for example, parents) are much more likely to give high grades than are people who depend on secondary sources, such as the media. The very highest ratings are given schools attended by a parent's oldest child. In 1985 and 1986, when these ratings were first obtained, a remarkable 70% plus of parents gave the schools their oldest child was attending an A or B rating. The importance of such findings can hardly be overstated. While xenophobia, chauvinism, a bad press, and lack of proprietary interest have much to do with low grades given the schools nationally – or even across town – educators should not discount the importance of firsthand information of the kind parents get from their children.

Raising Taxes to Improve the Schools

On nine occasions poll planners have asked people if they would approve tax increases specifically for public school improvement. Not surprisingly, given Americans' perennial resistance to tax increases, the idea has never been overwhelmingly popular. Even among those who say they approve, there is a considerable difference between telling a pollster yes to such a question and casting a favorable ballot in a school bond election. Historian John Lukacs has pointed out the difference between "public opinion" and "public sentiment."* Public opinion, he says, is the formal remarks that folks make to pollsters. Public sentiment is the private set of beliefs and biases that people are often embarrassed to disclose. Approving higher taxes for the benefit of schools may be an example in which one's public opinion differs from his private sentiment.

In any case, educators can take some comfort from responses to a question asked in 1983 and 1988: "Would you be willing to pay more taxes to help raise the standard of education in the United States?" In 1983, 58% of the public said yes to this question versus 33% who said no and 9% who were undecided. The affirmative vote had risen to 64% by 1988 and the negative had shrunk to 29%, with 7% abstaining.

The tax question most often asked in the Gallup polls was a bit different, and that difference no doubt explains a less favorable reaction. People were asked, "Suppose the local public schools said they needed much more money. As you feel at this time, would you vote to raise taxes for this purpose, or would you vote against raising taxes for this purpose?" Note the modifier "much more" and the fact that it was the "schools" – a word respondents probably translated to "school people" – who were asking for money, and without saying what it was for. Had the purpose "to raise standards" been given, would many more people have said yes? Probably.

Here are responses, from 1969 to 1984, to this second question:

	1969	1970	1971	1972	1981	1983	1984
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Would vote for	45	37	40	36	30	39	40
Would vote against	49	56	52	56	60	52	41
DK	6	7	8	8	10	9	12

Among the many questions that have dealt with school finances and taxation over the 20-year poll history, one of the more useful was this, asked in 1986: "Many states have recently passed school improvement legislation that requires additional financial expenditures. If your state needed to raise more money for the public schools, would you vote for or against the following proposals?"

Six forms of taxation were offered. The public approved increased alcoholic beverage taxes for education (79% for, 18% against), state lotteries for education (78% for, 10% against), and increased cigarette and tobacco taxes (74% for, 22% against). They opposed increased local property taxes (33% for, 60% against), increased gasoline taxes (28% for, 67% against), and increased income taxes (27% for, 66% against).

At least 15 other questions have been asked three or more times in the poll series. In the chapters that follow, trends in opinion on these questions can be studied.

Does the Public Approve of Change in the Public Schools?

Throughout the history of the poll, the public has indicated a willingness to accept new ideas or to have old ones revived in the hope of improving public school effectiveness.* Table III shows that, in more than 40 representative instances, a majority of respondents have approved proposals for change, often by large margins. During the same 20-year period, a majority disapproved of suggested changes in only about a dozen cases. Educators will note that the poll reports public approval of several recommendations of the National Commission on Excellence in Education and of other reform-minded bodies and agencies. In a few instances, changes that were once disapproved became acceptable a few years later.

Proposals intended to improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers head the list of approved changes. People would like to give prospective teachers basic competency tests before they begin teaching. A majority would require experienced teachers to take periodic competency tests or state board examinations in their specialty. A majority ap-

*As quoted by Fred Barnes in "Campaign '88: A Finance Romance," *The New Republic*, 11 July 1988, pp. 10-12.

*In this connection, results of two early poll questions (1970 and 1974) should be noted. Essentially, each asked whether local schools were trying too many or too few innovations. Nearly as many respondents said "too many" as "too few," and still more (32%) said "just about right."

proves the idea of career ladders for teachers and even (by a smaller margin) merit pay. A majority would retain teachers on the basis of performance, not seniority. More people than not would give higher pay for teachers in such shortage areas as math and science. A majority favors a year of internship at half pay for prospective teachers before certification. Finally, a majority favors a national set of standards for the certification of public school teachers.

Gallup questions have examined the acceptability of several ideas for school improvement that have already been adopted in many public schools. Approval for such ideas often has been registered in more than one poll. For example, people have said on four different occasions (1975, 1980, 1981, and 1987) that they would like more emphasis on ethical and moral education. In 1987 a majority also said they thought it possible to develop courses in ethics that would be acceptable to the people of their communities. Sex education, which many school authorities are hesitant to add even to the high school curriculum because of community opposition, real or imagined, has been approved by a public majority in six different surveys. Over the years majority approval has generally increased until in 1987 it was 76% versus 16% for high school and 55% versus 37% for elementary school. In 1988 a majority was even ready to have the public schools teach "safe sex" for AIDS prevention. The vote was 78% for, 16% against.

The idea of using standardized national tests for high school graduation, unworthy as it may be (in the eyes of professional educators), has been approved by the public in six different Gallup polls (including one, in 1958, before the current series was started.) Table III shows approval rising from 50% in 1958 to 73% in 1988.

Would fewer innovations have been approved had a price tag been part of the question? We do not know, but it seems very likely that many proposed innovations would be expensive to implement. Examples: good job-training programs (approved by a margin of 86% to 11%) and special schools to teach English to non-English-speaking immigrants (approved by an 82% to 13% margin). Also, if a merit pay system (approved by a majority) is to be fair and workable, it requires enormous commitments of both time and money.

Finally, when interviewers begin to probe, as was done on the topic of sex education in 1981, they sometimes find that answers seeming to express overall approval actually conceal rejection of some aspect of a proposal. In 1970 the public approved sex education by a margin of 65% to 28%. But when in 1981 pollsters asked first about sex education in the elementary school, they discovered that slightly more respondents opposed the latter (48%) than favored it (45%). Also, as the full report shows, only certain sex-related topics gained majority approval for school instruction, even in high school. Considered taboo or questionable were abortion, homosexuality, and the nature of sexual intercourse.

Inspection of Table III reveals many other interesting instances of public acceptance of change in education. These findings suggest that public opinion favors venturesomeness in the schools, and there is no reason that I can detect for believing that private sentiment is different. However, the cautious policy maker may well wish to conduct a local survey before initiating an important change.

Table III
Public Attitudes Toward Change and Innovation in Education*

Suggested Change	Approve %	Disapprove %
More career education (1973)	90	7
(1976)	80	5
Basic competency tests for teachers before hiring (1985)	89	6
State board exams in specialty before teacher certification (1984)	89	7
Periodic testing in specialty to retain certification (1979)	85	10
(1985)	85	11
(1988)	86	11
National standards for teachers (1988)	86	9
High school credit for community service (1978)	87	8
(1984)	79	16
Work-study programs for students uninterested in school (1974)	86	9
Parents confer with school personnel at start of each semester (1980)	84	11
Job-training programs for out-of-work youth, age 15-18 (1975)	86	11
Special schools to teach English to immigrants (1980)	82	13
Computers for instruction (1983)	81	10
Evening classes to teach parents how to help child in school (1971)	81	13
(1976)	77	19
Tax-supported kindergarten for all who wish it (1986)	80	13
More emphasis on moral/ethical education (1975)	79	15
(1980)	79	16
(1981)	70	17
Course credit for community service (1984)	79	16
Retaining teachers on basis of performance, not seniority (1981)	78	17
Constitutional amendment to permit prayer in public schools (1974)	77	17
Early graduation (1977)	74	22
(1980)	77	19
(1987)	68	26
High school credit for volunteer work by students not interested in school (1974)	77	17
Grade promotion only if student can pass test (1978)	68	27
(1983)	74	20
(1984)	71	25

*For more details on each change, see complete poll reports in later chapters.

Suggested Change	Approve %	Disapprove %
Standardized national tests to compare local with other students (1970)	75	16
(1971)	70	21
(1983)	75	17
(1986)	77	16
(1987)*	70	14
(1988)	81	14
Liberal arts degree before teacher training (1987)	72	17
Compulsory kindergarten (1986)	71	22
Nongraded (continuous progress) schools (1972)	71	22
(1975)	64	28
(1980)	62	30
(1984)	54	39
Standardized national test for high school graduation (1958)	50	39
(1976)	65	31
(1981)	64	26
(1984)	65	27
(1988)	73	22
Compulsory national service for unemployed youth (1979)	67	27
Parents' right to choose public school their children attend (1986)	68	25
(1987)	71	20
Constitutional amendment to equalize per-pupil spending (1974)	68	25
Sex education (1970)	65	28
(1981) high school	70	22
(1981) elementary	45	48
(1985) high school	75	19
(1985) elementary	52	43
(1987) high school	76	16
(1987) elementary	55	37
Job placement by schools for recent graduates (1980)	64	30
Alternative schools (1973)	62	26
Girls participating with boys in noncontact sports (1974)**	59	35
Merit pay for teachers (1981)†	58	36
Fundamental (back-to-basics) schools (1975)	57	33
(1977)††	34	5
Year of internship for teachers at half pay before certification (1980)	56	36
(1988)	51	41

*The question was worded slightly differently in this poll.

**By 1985 a majority approved of having boys and girls participate on the same teams in tennis, swimming, and track but not in basketball, baseball, football, or wrestling.

†In 1988 the public approved "an increased pay scale for those teachers who have proved themselves particularly capable," 84% to 11%.

††In the 1977 poll only 41% had heard of the term "back-to-basics." Of these, 83% approved of the concept and 11% disapproved, resulting in these low percentages.

Suggested change	Approve %	Disapprove %
Rewarding schools for improving achievement of minorities (1988)	53	34
Year-round schools (1970)	42	49
(1972)	53	41
(1988)	40	53
Constitutional amendment to permit government financial aid to parochial schools (1974)*	52	35
Mainstreaming for the physically handicapped (1979)	53	36
Higher pay for math, science teachers than for others (1983)	50	35
Preschool child care as part of the public school system (1976)	46	49
(1981)	46	47
Same question, somewhat different wording (1988)	70	23
Tax-supported child care for latch-key kids in public schools (1985)	43	45
Voucher system (1970)	43	46
(1971)	38	44
(1981)	43	41
(1983)	51	38
(1985)	45	40
(1986)	46	41
(1987)	44	41
Providing instruction in student's native language (1988)	42	49
Extend school year by 30 days (1982)	37	53
(1983)	40	49
(1984)	44	50
Lengthen school day by one hour (1982)	37	55
(1983)	41	48
(1984)	42	52
Start school at age 4 (1972)	32	64
(1973)	30	64
(1986)	29	64
Conduct vocational education outside the public school system (1978)	32	53
More independent study (1971)	31	22
Raise college entrance requirements (1984)	27	59
Constitutional amendment to prohibit forced busing for integration (1974)	18	72
Home schools (1984)	16	73
(1988)	28	59
Mainstreaming for the mentally handicapped (1979)	13	77

*But in 1981, when asked whether some tax money should be used to help parochial schools, only 40% of respondents favored the idea and 51% opposed it.

Lessons from the Polls

The first 20 Gallup education polls have considerable potential for helping school authorities and policy makers improve American public education. Their prime function,

of course, has been to provide a kind of topographic map of public opinion on a variety of education questions and issues. As I have just shown, this map indicates rather clearly what kind of changes are most acceptable to the public. Professional educators agree with the public on a number of these questions, as Appendix II demonstrates. (This appendix compares the opinions of educators and the lay public on questions asked in the nineteenth poll.) It also shows disagreement on a number of important issues, for example, the need for better financing of public education. These disagreements define a future agenda for the profession. Where the public is plainly uninformed or in error, educators and their professional associations should muster the best communications resources at their command to set the record straight or explain their position. Organizations like the National School Public Relations Association can help with techniques for this public relations effort, but the first problem is one of consciousness raising. Few educators have a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between public opinion and the health of the schools, and many do not even appreciate its importance. Poll after poll has shown that, so far as the schools are concerned, familiarity breeds respect.

One of the immediate, concrete steps school leaders can take in this connection is to make sure that every required course in government features a unit on American public education. Such courses can overcome at least some of the ignorance about our education system revealed in the polls. Too often, educators take it for granted that, because a majority of the people spend at least 12 years in the public schools, they understand the schools' purposes, how they are organized, and how they are financed and controlled. Because we know how few facts taught in courses on government stick in students' memory, people should be exposed to a variety of refresher courses after leaving school. These can come partly from the schools themselves, in the form of bulletins and flyers, fairs and open houses, much more complete report cards for students to carry home, and the like. But educators also need to enlist the help and cooperation of the media. Many enlightened editors are beginning to recognize the thirst for more and better coverage of school news. Some of them have seen results of the two polls (the first and the 20th) which indicate: 1) that people recognize their own ignorance about the schools, 2) that they depend heavily on newspapers and radio and television for information about the schools, and 3) that a solid majority want more information. For editors who are not familiar with these findings, educators might arrange an introduction. Editors who are not aware of it should be informed that the number-one concern for Americans in 1988 (according to a Roper poll conducted in April) was the education of children.

On three occasions Gallup education polls have asked, "How important are schools to one's future success – extremely important, fairly important, not too important?" The results:

	1973	1980	1982
	%	%	%
Extremely important	76	82	80
Fairly important	19	15	18
Not too important	4	2	1
No opinion	1	1	1

Obviously, the overwhelming faith of the American public in the power of education had not diminished between 1973 and 1982. A similar question was asked about college education in 1978 and again in 1983. Belief that college is "extremely important" to success grew from 36% in 1978 to 58% in 1983. People remain convinced that the schools, if only they were better organized or staffed or supported, could somehow take on any task.

In fact, this is part of the problem; the public has shifted or tried to shift too many problems to the schools, and educators have been unwilling or unable to resist.

In this connection it is instructive to examine answers to a question the poll asked in 1980: "How much confidence do you, yourself, have in these American institutions to serve the public's needs?" Among eight institutions listed, respondents placed public schools second only to the church. Then why, one might ask, isn't the public willing to leave moral and ethical instruction to the church, since morality and ethics would seem to the church's prime concern? Why do people favor, four to one, having the schools take on this herculean task? For the same reason, one supposes, that the public believes that America's strength in the future depends on developing the best education system in the world. (Eighty-four percent of the respondents in 1982 and 88% in 1988 said this is "very important," while only 47% in both 1982 and 1988 regarded "building the strongest military force in the world" as very important.)

If others will not explain to the public what the schools can do best with the limited resources they are given, then it is up to educators themselves to do so. The very fact that many people view their schools as inadequate to meet today's needs gives rise to the hope that support for significant improvement will be forthcoming in the years ahead. Properly conceived, the combination of strong public faith in education as the answer to society's ills, willingness to accept change in the schools, and the continuing crisis in education constitute a magnificent opportunity for a triumph of educational leadership.

Chapter 2
The First Annual Poll, 1969

Events of the Year in Education

The 1969, the nation was slowly coming out of shock from the assassination, the year before, of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy. But it was still in shock and convulsion because of the war in Vietnam. To protest that war, college students (and many faculty members) sparked what has been called the largest nationwide public demonstrations in our history. Millions of secondary and elementary students joined these manifestations of outrage. A climax came on October 15, Moratorium Day, when many school districts across the nation cancelled classes or supported an end of the war in special observances and classroom discussions.

The protests influenced education not only because of the large number of school-connected people who participated but also because, as observers noted, 1) they revealed a deep concern among students about a great social dilemma; and 2) they served as the nation's greatest, liveliest lesson in civics, government, and public opinion. A spokesman for a New England group of school administrators said: "Constructive student involvement hit a new high during Moratorium Day. Here we had a great lesson in participatory democracy, with more spirited student dialogue on important issues than has ever occurred before."

The Vietnam conflict inspired more than peaceful discussion. America's campuses were aflame. Unrest, disruption, and violence swept through hundreds of campuses from Harvard to Stanford. The war was not the only object of student anger. It spilled over into such related issues as the draft, ROTC, and university participation in military research. And throughout the year black students protested against what they considered racial inequality and discrimination. The most memorable event of the year produced the most memorable news photograph. It showed black students coming out of a Cornell university building, guns in hand, bandoliers over shoulders. Days before, they had occupied the building and warned they would defend themselves if university officials tried to dislodge them before granting their demands for greater student rights.

Almost as counterpoint to the Vietnam protests and college-related issues were protests by high school students over their status as learners. Like a series of firecrackers, disorders popped at senior and junior high schools in big and small cities, in suburban and rural communities. Student activists resorted to strikes, sit-ins, boycotts, and riots; and there were countless orderly actions – petition campaigns and demonstrations. A study showed that three out of five high school principals in the nation had to cope with disturbances of this kind.

Controversy raged over student dress codes, hair length, underground newspapers, dissatisfaction with curriculum, school food service, and the right to smoke on school grounds.

More than student protests troubled the educational community in 1969. "Virtually overnight, the convulsive phenomenon of drug abuse has assumed national proportions and looms as an urgent challenge to educators." So said the National School Boards Association, and the statement was repeated or endorsed throughout the year by school administrators. The indicators of substance abuse were "tragic and terrifying" for school officials. Thousands of high school and junior high school students were discovered to be using narcotics, sniffing glue, smoking marijuana, and popping barbiturates and amphetamines.

Some San Francisco high schools set up "crash pads" where students obtained emergency treatment when overcome by narcotics while in school. In Mamaroneck, New York, one in five students was experimenting with narcotics. "There is no magic around our town which will keep drugs out," said a police official in wealthy Westport, Connecticut. "Drug abuse by students is nationwide and our schools are not excepted."

School officials found themselves without knowledge, experience, or policies to face the challenge. They sought guidance from police and legal authorities, from psychologists and doctors; some even sought help from former drug addicts. They held public meetings with parents "to bring the drug problem into the open." Curriculum directors searched for lessons, units, and course offerings to combat the problem.

The first national seminar on drug abuse among high school students was held in Washington. One of those addressing the seminar was Senator Harold E. Hughes (D – Iowa), who said that school officials "do not have an effective drug education program. Their usual reaction is to circulate a pamphlet about the evils of drugs and give a crisis lecture to the student body."

Congress passed the first Drug Abuse Education Act in 1969. It authorized $29 million for three years of teacher training, development of curriculum materials, and "drug alert seminars" by local school districts. State legislatures, too, made their first, though often tentative, moves to help schools with anti-drug abuse courses.

Overshadowed by these major national problems, but not obscured, were a host of volatile issues that absorbed the nation's interest. High on the list were:

The pace of desegregation. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously that 33 Mississippi school districts must end

segregation "at once" and must operate integrated systems "now and forever." This was the Court's response to the Nixon administration dictate that school districts could take "additional time" to desegregate if they needed it. The Court was impatient with such notions. Foes of segregation were elated, saying "Deliberate speed [under which schools were allowed to desegregate] is dead, dead, dead." But Mississippi's governors and its senators in Congress said that "once again our children have been offered as sacrificial lambs on the altar of social experimentation."

Quality of reading instruction. Citing "shocking facts" about reading deficiencies, U.S. Commissioner of Education James E. Allen Jr. called for improvement in reading instruction. He charged that in large city schools up to half of the students read below expectations, and that about half of the unemployed youth were functionally illiterate. He urged school districts to set for themselves the goal of ensuring that, by the end of the 1970s, "the right to read" shall be a reality for every student. For 1969, at least, "the right to read" became a slogan.

How high is black intelligence? The year's sharpest debate was caused by Arthur R. Jensen's allegation that "low levels of intelligence among some Negro children may have more to do with heredity than with environment." Psychologist Jensen made his claim in an article published in the *Harvard Educational Review*. The arguments in the article dealt with the question of why some black children do not succeed in compensatory programs. Jensen's answer: "Genetic factors, rather than environmental factors." "Sheer nonsense," said Kenneth B. Clark, a black educator and psychologist whose testimony had strongly influenced the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown* decision to end legal school segregation. "Scientifically, Jensen's article is insidious. He's not a racist, he's just naive."

Sex education under attack. Schools offering sex education came under attack by groups having such names as MOMS (Mothers of Moral Stability), POSE (Parents Opposed to Sex Education), SOS (Sanity on Sex), as well as by the Christian Crusade and the John Birch Society. National, state, and local groups – estimated by some to number more than 3,000 – joined forces in attacking boards of education, superintendents, and teachers. They charged that the schools were offering lessons in "raw sex" and dispensing "salacious and immoral facts." Under the spur of such attacks, some school officials reasserted their intention to continue offering sex education programs; others decided to "re-examine and readjust their programs."

Poll Findings

The first annual Gallup Poll of Public Attitudes Toward Education,* taken in 1969, was intended to establish benchmarks against which opinion change could be measured in later years. For this reason it was the most comprehensive of all the polls, including some 60 questions. A number of these questions sought demographic data (sex, race, education, occupation, age, religion, region and size of home community, income, and political affiliation, if any, of respondents). But 50 of them dealt with aspects of education and schools. As Chapter 1 tells us, many of these same questions were asked several times in subsequent polls.

More than in later poll reports, George Gallup Sr. offered shrewd observations and conclusions in the first poll:

> Three of the major tasks of U.S. public schools can be stated as follows: first, to interest a greater number of citizens in the public schools; second, to increase financial support as needs grow; and third, to create a climate . . . favorable to improvement in the quality of education.
>
> . . . as the data from this survey show, all of these problems tend to be interrelated. These conclusions seem warranted:
>
> 1. While the American people seem reasonably well-informed about school activities, they are ill-informed about education itself.
>
> 2. Since they have little or no basis for judging the quality of education in their local schools, pressures are absent for improving quality.
>
> 3. Fortunately, the public would like more information about modern education – the new methods being tried and new ideas about the kind of education that is needed. In short, people . . . need information that is presently not provided by the various media of communication.
>
> 4. From a public relations viewpoint, the biggest problem at the present time for the schools is the matter of discipline . . . those who have no children complain the loudest, but even those with children in the public schools criticize school officials and personnel for not being more strict in the matter of deportment and dress of students. As long as this complaint about the public schools is present, the vote on school bond issues is likely to suffer accordingly.
>
> 5. The teaching profession probably has never been held in higher esteem in this nation. This is complimentary to those who are in the profession – but the urge to get into the field on the part of so many students today may create another problem in another decade or two. [A prescient observation; the Seventies were plagued by teacher surpluses.]
>
> 6. The public has accepted the right of teachers to join unions. But the public has not yet accepted the right of teachers to strike and, judging from the data, many reject the idea of tenure, at least until better ways are found for weeding out incompetent teachers.
>
> 7. The weight of opinion is that public school teachers are underpaid. But this situation is changing and the number holding such an opinion is far less than it was a decade ago.
>
> 8. School boards get a high vote of approval across the nation. The public believes they work hard to improve the quality of education and to run the schools efficiently. At the same time, some believe that their decisions are often politically motivated.

*The official name of the poll changed after 1978. Instead of "The Gallup Poll of Public Attitudes Toward Education," it became "The Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools."

9. There is no dearth of individuals who would be interested in becoming school board members. But, as other studies have shown, most do not want to fight their way through political campaigns, requiring a lot of time and money, in order to serve the public in this capacity.

10. The public schools do a reasonably good job of interesting parents in school affairs. They do a very poor job in reaching those who do not have children attending the schools. A better way must be found to reach those persons in the community who do not happen to have children in the public schools, so that these persons may become informed, involved, and active. The future of the schools to a great extent depends on success in achieving this goal. [The problem was to become worse. In 1969, 50% of Gallup's respondents had no children in school; by 1985 the number had grown to 70%.]

11. If willingness to vote additional taxes for schools saying they need more money is accepted as a good test of the public's attitudes toward the public schools, then the nation divides itself about evenly. This does not mean that one-half of the nation is opposed to the public schools. It means simply that approximately half would resist requests for more money – and presumably vote against new bond issues.

12. An important factor that works in favor of getting school bond issues accepted is the simple fact that those groups or segments of society that are opposed are those least likely to cast their ballots in these elections. The best-educated tend to be most favorable and most likely to vote; the least well-educated make up the group least favorable, but, at the same time, least likely to vote. This observation holds only for the nation as a whole. [In some local communities the opposite may be true.]

13. Finally, the survey helps explain the slowness of the schools to accept innovations. So much effort is consumed in keeping the schools in operation and doing a reasonably good job that little time can be devoted by school officials to promoting change. The public is so uninformed about innovations and so lacking in objective ways of judging school achievement that little, if any, pressure is exerted by them to make improvements.

What the People Know About Their Schools

Answers to 17 questions designed to discover how much people know about the public schools, where they get their information, and the like, are reported below. In a word, people generally know very little and readily admit it. It should be noted in passing that Gallup interviewers made no effort to check the accuracy of information respondents volunteered or purported to have. Actually, it was often wildly wrong. The best thing that can be said about this portion of the poll is that it revealed a healthy desire, on the part of a sizable majority (65%), to know more about their local schools.

How much do you know about the local schools, quite a lot, some, or very little?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Quite a lot	18	12	27	21
Some	40	30	50	50
Very little	42	58	23	29
	100	100	100	100

Do you happen to know the name of the superintendent of schools?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	56	46	68	58
No	44	54	32	42
	100	100	100	100

Do you happen to know the name of the principal of the elementary school in your neighborhood?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	47	24	76	47
No	53	76	24	53
	100	100	100	100

Do you know the name of the principal of the high school attended by the children in your neighborhood?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	40	26	58	35
No	60	74	42	65
	100	100	100	100

Now, a few questions about the local school board. First, do you happen to know the name of the president of the board?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	26	21	32	28
No	72	76	67	72
No answer	2	3	1	—
	100	100	100	100

Do you think there is a shortage of classroom space in this community?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	56	49	65	51
No	29	29	29	35
Don't know/ no answer	15	22	6	14
	100	100	100	100

What is your guess as to the cost per child per year in the public schools of your community?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Gave a $ figure	43	40	45	54
Don't know	57	60	55	46
	100	100	100	100

Are there many high school dropouts in this community?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Quite a few	26	24	28	24
Almost none	41	36	46	44
Don't know	30	37	22	27
Commented: average, even one is too many, etc.	3	3	4	5
	100	100	100	100

What percentage of the high school graduates from your high school go on to college, do you think?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Gave an actual % figure	67	65	70	75
Don't know	33	35	30	25
	100	100	100	100

Have you read any book in the last year that deals with education?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	16	15	17	19
No	84	85	83	81
	100	100	100	100

What is the name of the book(s)?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
1 title given	4	4	5	4
2 titles given	2	2	2	—
3 titles given	—	—	—	2
4-6 titles given	1	—	1	—
No titles given	10	9	10	12
	17*	15*	18*	18*

*Equals percent of persons reading any book dealing with education during the last year.

During the last year, have you received any newsletter, pamphlet, or any other material telling what the local schools are doing?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	35	16	57	44
No	61	81	39	52
Can't recall	4	3	4	4
	100	100	100	100

During the last month have you read any articles in the newspapers about local schools?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	60	54	65	77
No	34	39	29	17
Can't recall	6	7	6	6
	100	100	100	100

Have you heard anything about local schools on radio during this period?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	36	32	39	46
No	58	61	55	51
Can't recall	6	7	6	3
	100	100	100	100

How about television?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	35	33	36	53
No	59	61	59	43
Can't recall	6	6	5	4
	100	100	100	100

From your own personal viewpoint, what is the best source of information about the local schools?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Local newspaper	38	41	34	46
Word of mouth: own children, students, neighbors	25	21	31	15
School personnel	20	17	23	16
Radio & TV	16	19	11	18
Meetings at school	15	11	20	19
School publications	8	5	12	11
Don't know/ no answer	6	9	2	3
	123*	123*	135*	126*

*Totals exceed 100% due to multiple answers by respondents.

Would you like to know more about the schools in this community?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	65	55	77	74
No	35	45	23	26
	100	100	100	100

Biggest Problems of the Local Public Schools

A question asking what respondents perceive as the biggest problem of the local public schools has become standard in the annual Gallup education polls. Student behavior

problems (for many years summarized under the heading "discipline" and more recently as "drug abuse") have always headed this list. As noted in Chapter 1, the media have seized on responses to this question as indicative of major and genuine weaknesses of the schools, although the state of public knowledge about schools as revealed in other questions should engender considerable skepticism. Later polls by Gallup and Phi Delta Kappa show that educators themselves do not consider discipline and drugs as important, for example, as lack of proper financial support. Gallup played down responses to this question in his first report.

The question and the findings:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the public schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Discipline	26	27	24	39
Facilities	22	17	27	26
Teachers	17	14	20	24
Finances	14	15	15	7
Integration/ segregation	13	15	12	8
Parents' lack of interest	7	7	7	5
Transportation	5	5	5	5
Curriculum	4	3	5	9
Pupils' lack of interest	3	4	3	4
Miscellaneous	8	7	8	5
There are no problems	4	3	6	1
Don't know/ no answer	13	17	9	13
	136*	134*	141*	146*

*Totals exceed 100% due to multiple answers by respondents.

The problems question was followed by one on student behavior and another on dress:

How do you feel about the discipline in the local schools — is it too strict, not strict enough, or just about right?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Too strict	2	2	2	—
Not strict enough	49	52	45	58
Just about right	44	39	52	36
Don't know/ no answer	5	7	1	6
	100	100	100	100

Some people feel the schools do not go far enough in regulating the way boys and girls dress for school. Do you think there should be greater regulation of the way children dress for school, or less?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Greater	53	55	50	63
Less	7	7	5	4
All right as it is	36	31	42	32
No opinion	4	7	3	1
	100	100	100	100

Attitudes Toward Teaching and Teachers

Would you like to have a child of yours take up teaching in the public schools as a career?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	75	69	81	78
No	15	18	12	14
Don't know/ no answer	10	13	7	8
	100	100	100	100

Do you think salaries in this community for the teachers are too high, too low, or just about right?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Too high	2	3	2	2
Too low	33	30	35	27
Just about right	43	43	44	47
Don't know/ no answer	22	24	19	24
	100	100	100	100

Do you think teachers should be given automatic raises or should raises be given to some and not to others?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, automatic	44	45	45	32
No, not automatic	45	43	47	51
No opinion	11	12	8	17
	100	100	100	100

How do you feel about teachers joining labor unions?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Those Who Are In Agreement				
Yes	23	22	24	33
Yes, if they want to do so	12	11	13	4
Yes, for bargaining power	7	7	7	8
Yes, their own union	3	3	3	—
Yes, if conditions justify	—	—	—	4
	45	43	47	49

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Those Who Are Against				
No	33	33	33	33
No, it is a profession	5	6	4	8
No, they are public servants	1	2	—	—
No, this would only give them power to strike	1	*	1	2
	40	41	38	43
No opinion	3	3	3	3
Miscellaneous	1	2	1	*
Dont' know/no answer	11	11	11	5
	15	16	15	8
Totals	100	100	100	100

*Less than 1%

Do you think teachers should have the right to strike?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Those Who Say "Yes"				
Yes	19	19	19	19
Yes, if conditions justify	10	11	11	10
Yes, it is their right	8	7	8	6
	37	37	38	35
Those Who Say "No"				
No	38	37	36	39
No, it hurts the children	11	11	11	10
No, public servants should find another way	8	7	8	11
No, it sets a poor example	2	2	2	2
	59	57	57	62
Don't know/ no answer	4	6	5	3
Totals	100	100	100	100

Do you think this local public school system has a hard time getting good teachers?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	52	49	54	51
No	32	31	34	34
Don't know/ no answer	16	20	12	15
	100	100	100	100

From what you know, are teachers in your community pretty well satisfied with their pay and working conditions or are they dissatisfied?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Satisfied	35	32	39	33
Dissatisfied	35	35	35	35
Don't know/ no answer	30	33	26	32
	100	100	100	100

Are teachers in this community paid more money, or less money, than teachers in other comparable communities?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
More	12	11	12	14
Less	17	16	20	11
About same	34	34	35	36
Don't know/ no answer	37	39	33	39
	100	100	100	100

Do you think this local public school system has a hard time keeping good teachers?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	48	46	49	48
No	35	31	40	34
Don't know/ no answer	17	23	11	18
	100	100	100	100

Do you think there are some teachers in the local public school system who should be dropped or fired? If "yes," why?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	38	32	45	39
No	22	19	27	15
Don't know/ no answer	40	49	28	46
	100	100	100	100
Reasons Why				
Incompetent	21	19	24	24
Personality problems	9	7	11	6
Too young/too old	5	3	7	4
Lack of communication with children	3	2	4	4
Miscellaneous	1	1	2	2
Don't know/ no answer	3	3	3	4
	42*	35*	51*	44*

*Exceeds total replying "yes" because some respondents gave more than one answer.

Attitudes Toward School Boards and Their Problems

How good a job do you think the school board does?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Excellent	25	22	29	25
Above average	16	14	19	12
Fair	21	20	22	17
Poor, terrible	7	6	9	7
Don't know/ no answer	31	38	21	39
	100	100	100	100

Do you think it is politically motivated? That is, do local politics play a part in decisions made by the board?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	44	43	44	46
No	39	35	44	33
Don't know/ no answer	17	22	12	21
	100	100	100	100

If someone asked you to be a school board member, would you be interested?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	31	27	35	39
No	67	71	64	58
Don't know/ no answer	2	2	1	3
	100	100	100	100

Why do you say that?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Those Who Say "Yes"				
Interested in helping	27	24	29	32
Am qualified	4	3	1	5
	31	27	30	37
Those Who Say "No"				
Not qualified	31	33	30	20
Don't have time necessary	15	9	22	25
Not interested	9	11	6	7
Have no children in school	9	17	*	3
Too much responsibility	6	5	7	1
	70	75	65	56
No answer	5	5	5	7
Totals	106**	107**	100	100

*Less than 1%

**Totals exceed 100% due to multiple answers by respondents.

If you were to become a school board member, what changes in the schools would you favor?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Curriculum, courses, course content	15	14	16	19
Professional staff	14	11	20	13
Building & facilities	11	8	15	10
Better discipline	9	9	9	11
Financial	4	5	4	4
Transportation	3	2	4	5
Segregation/ integration	2	2	1	2
Miscellaneous	2	2	3	5
	60	53	72	69
I'd make no changes; it's all right as is	11	10	12	7
Don't know/ no answer	44	50	36	40
Totals	115*	113*	120*	116*

*Totals exceed 100% due to multiple answers by respondents.

Does it work hard to improve the quality of education?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	69	63	77	63
No	11	10	12	16
Don't know/ no answer	20	27	11	21
	100	100	100	100

Does it work hard to see that schools function efficiently and at the lowest cost?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	62	56	70	58
No	15	15	15	19
Don't know/ no answer	23	29	15	23
	100	100	100	100

Do you think that school buildings are more expensive than they need to be?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, in general	26	27	23	33
Yes, too fancy, too elaborate	14	13	13	18
No, in general	42	40	47	34
No, they are not good enough	7	7	7	4
Don't know/ no answer	11	13	10	11
	100	100	100	100

Do you think money is spent foolishly by the school authorities or the local school board?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	26	26	25	31
No	65	62	70	61
Don't know/ no answer	9	12	5	8
	100	100	100	100

Citizen Participation

Have you attended any lecture, any meeting, or any social occasion in any local school building during the last year?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	37	17	59	56
No	59	77	41	43
No answer	4	6	—	1
	100	100	100	100

Have you *ever* attended a school board meeting?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	16	14	18	15
No	81	82	81	83
No answer	3	4	1	2
	100	100	100	100

Do you belong to the PTA or a similar group?

	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
Yes	52	65
No	48	35
	100	100

If "no": Since you do have children in school, what are your reasons for not belonging to the PTA or a similar group?

No time	21	11
Not interested	11	10
No PTA or similar group	9	10
New in this area	2	1
Health prevents attending	2	—
Miscellaneous	1	3
Don't know/no answer	2	—
	48*	35*

*Totals equals number who do not belong.

If "belong to PTA": Do you attend meetings regularly during the school year, or not?

Regularly	22	36
Not regularly	30	28
No answer	—	1
	52*	65*

*Equals percent of those belonging to PTA.

If "not regularly": Will you please tell why you do not regularly attend?

	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
No time	20	18
Not interested	6	5
Health prevents attending	1	1
Miscellaneous	3	2
Don't know/no answer	1	3
	30*	28*

*Equals percent of those not regularly attending PTA.

Financial Support

Suppose the local public schools said they needed much more money. As you feel at this time, would you vote to raise taxes for this purpose, or would you vote against raising taxes for this purpose?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
For	45	41	51	40
Against	49	53	44	56
Don't know/ no answer	6	6	5	4
	100	100	100	100

Same question, answers by other categories.

	For %	Against %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Sex			
Men	47	48	5
Women	43	50	7
Race			
White	46	49	5
Nonwhite	45	47	8
Education			
Elementary grades	32	60	8
High school incomplete	41	54	5
High school complete	44	50	6
Technical, trade, or business school	52	47	1
College incomplete	54	43	3
College graduate	61	34	5
Occupation			
Business and professional	56	40	4
Clerical and sales	44	52	4
Farm	31	62	7
Skilled labor	46	47	7
Unskilled labor	39	56	5
Non-labor force	41	53	6
Age			
21 to 29 years	56	39	5
30 to 49 years	47	48	5
50 years and over	39	55	6
Religion			
Protestant	47	47	6
Roman Catholic	41	55	4
Jewish	47	51	2
All others	48	44	8
Region			
East	47	48	5
Midwest	40	54	6
South	50	44	6
West	43	51	6

	For %	Against %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Income			
$15,000 and over	55	41	4
$10,000 to $14,900	49	47	4
$ 7,000 to $ 9,999	46	48	6
$ 5,000 to $ 6,999	47	50	3
$ 4,000 to $ 4,999	41	52	7
$ 3,000 to $ 3,999	42	48	10
$ 2,500 to $ 2,999	38	53	9
Under $2,499	32	61	7
Community size			
500,000 and over	45	51	4
50,000 to 499,999	47	46	7
25,000 to 49,999	31	64	5
Under 25,000	46	48	6

Did you happen to vote in the last school bond election?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	41	36	45	49
No	49	55	44	40
Can't recall	10	9	11	11
	100	100	100	100

Can you recall how you voted? Did you vote for or against the bond?

For	26	21	33	22
Against	10	11	8	15
Can't recall	5	4	4	12
	41*	36*	45*	49*

*Total equals percent of respondents voting in last school bond election.

Some people say that the federal government should pay all of the cost of a college education. Others believe that most of the costs should continue to be paid, as now, by parents and students. Which would you favor?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Federal government pay	16	15	17	12
Parents & students pay	70	71	69	70
Federal government & parents/students	7	8	7	9
Other methods	4	3	4	4
Don't know/ no answer	3	3	3	5
	100	100	100	100

Chapter 3
The Second Annual Poll, 1970

Events of the Year in Education

On the American college campus, unrest grew into violence and escalated into bloodshed and death. National Guardsmen killed four students at a Kent State University (Ohio) campus meeting called to protest the American incursion into Cambodia. As one of the responses to the killings, student strikes erupted across the country. Students also boycotted classes, occupied college buildings, destroyed campus installations – and held sit-ins and prayer sessions.

The events rocked higher education. They also disturbed Congress and the White House. Senators and representatives introduced measures to seek causes and propose solutions to the student disaffection. President Nixon set up the President's Commission on Campus Unrest, naming William H. Scranton its chairman. Scranton, a liberal Republican, and his commission reported within 90 days that campus unrest was caused by racial tension, the war in Southeast Asia, and the defects of the university itself. Scranton told the President that "a new youth culture is seeking new values." The student today, Scranton said, "is opposed to materialism, competition, technology, and militarism." Nixon all but ignored the report; he didn't agree with the commission's views.

In another major event of 1970, President Nixon also tried to ignore the call of Congress for more federal aid to education. He vetoed a $4.4 billion appropriations bill for elementary and secondary education, vocational education, school libraries, and education for the handicapped, arguing that the $4.4 billion was nearly $1 billion too much. The House and Senate overrode the veto – an action hailed by some as "the long overdue reordering of our national priorities."

A minor reordering of priorities, of sorts, took place in the curriculum for elementary and secondary education: environmental education took a firm hold in countless classes and course offerings.

Environmental education received a strong boost from the 1970 observance of Earth Day, staged to awaken the nation to the danger of pollution, wastage of natural resources, and uncontrolled population growth. Millions of students from all levels of education took part in Earth Day teach-ins, lectures, demonstrations, and film festivals. Refusing for one day to ride automobiles or school buses (considered air polluters), students walked, bicycled, roller-skated, or rode horseback to school and college. They collected litter and trash, cleaning up streets, backyards, streams, and lakes. They staged protests against local industry accused of polluting air, water, and earth.

The educational payoffs came when senators and representatives introduced legislation to promote environmental education, and private foundations began awarding grants to school systems to help them train teachers in this new discipline. The National Science Foundation sponsored conferences for state department of education science supervisors on ways to enhance environmental education. Curriculum directors in local and state school systems rushed through units of learning on ecology for classroom use, not waiting for publishers to go through with their plans for textual materials on the subject.

Toward the year's end, some 150 educators assembled at Green Bay, Wisconsin, for the first National Conference on Environmental Education. Their aim was to bring environmental teaching past the point of nature study, anti-littering campaigns, preaching ecological messages, and asking students to memorize facts. Consensus of the conference: Every class in ecology studies should encourage students to examine their own environments and find out what to do about them.

Innovation was in the air during this first year of the Seventies. School authorities became intrigued with what was called "performance contracting." This was a scheme under which a private contractor entered into an agreement with a school district, for a fee, to raise student achievement in reading and math. No increase in achievement, no fee; for a greater than expected achievement, a higher fee. Texarkana, Arkansas, gained fame as one of the first school districts to carry out the experiment (on a $250,000 federal grant), with putative success.

Initial Texarkana results (later deflated) sparked expectations among school officials of higher student achievements, and among business firms of a new way to make profits. "Performance contracting" became the year's most publicized educational venture. It was spreading fast and was controversial.

Toward the end of the year, the value of performance contracts rose to an estimated $200 million – most paid by the federal government. One firm after another entered the business. Some 100 organizations were said to be writing performance contracts with schools in all parts of the country.

As the year drew to an end, supporters predicted continued spread of performance contracting. But the opposition began to assemble its ammunition. The American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO) vowed to "slow down the scheme that would turn the schools over to private corporations." The AFT set up an "instant alert system" to evaluate proposed performance contracts and alert communities to their dangers. The head of the New York State Teachers Association, a National Education Association affiliate, attacked performance contractors for an "insatiable hunger for big profits." The NEA itself first hotly opposed performance contracting, then softened its antagonism, pledging to keep tabs on "a practice that could discredit the schools in the eyes of the public."

The year was also noteworthy for the publication of the first results of the National Assessment of Educational Prog-

ress, providing a sketchy picture of what students achieve in science and citizenship.

. National assessment was a dream come true for those who had been insisting that we must find out whether the billions spent on public education are used effectively. What do students learn? What do they know? What don't they know? These were questions that troubled educators and laymen. When first proposed, national assessment met with opposition by sectors of organized education. Debate and discussion – and finally agreement – led to the first tests in science and citizenship. (Subsequent assessment was planned in mathematics, writing, reading, literature, art, music, and social studies.)

About 90,000 persons in four age groups (ages 9, 13, 17, and young adults) were given the first national assessment exercises. The findings were a mixed bag.

About achievement in citizenship: Students could give reasonably accurate reasons why congressmen and senators vote the way the people in their districts want them to vote. They knew under what conditions a state might have more senators than representatives. Relatively few students could identify by name the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, or Speaker of the House. Most students could name the two major political parties, but few could name a third party. Most were aware of racial discrimination in the United States; far fewer were aware of religious discrimination.

About achievement in science: Most 9-year-old pupils knew that the human baby comes from its mother's body; that protein is important in building muscle. Older students could identify the ingredients that go into a balanced meal. They also knew that no man ever saw a live dinosaur. A disappointing number of students did not know the function of the placenta. They did not know that nuclei are more dense than the rest of the atom. Not many students knew how to measure and calculate the density of a rectangular wood block. Nor did they know that rocks can be dated by the amounts of uranium and lead they contain.

Poll Findings

The second poll repeated several questions from the first, but introduced several new ones and included 299 high school juniors and seniors among the respondents, so that some interesting comparisons were possible in this era of student unrest.

Gallup made these overall observations:

> People continue to have a high regard for the schools of their community and they believe firmly that education is the royal road to success in America. Yet there is undeniably a new mood in the nation with which educators must reckon.
>
> Student protests, both at the high school and college level, have, in the case of the curricula, opened the whole issue of whether education in America is reality-related. Students as well as adults are beginning to question the judgment of educators – the experts.

Budgets and bond issues are being voted down in increasing number. Evidence of this trend is to be found in the results of the present study. The U.S. Office of Education reports that in the last year (fiscal 1969) school bond issues were voted down by voters at a record rate. By dollar value, voters approved less than 44% of the $3.9 billion in bond issues put to the electorate. The $1.7 billion that passed comprised the lowest total since 1962. A decade ago 80% of such bond issues were approved.

The costs of education, as is true of everything else, increase constantly, and it is perhaps inevitable that as these costs mount, taxpayers are likely to become increasingly critical of educational policies.

When people read or hear about the lack of discipline in the schoolrooms of their own community – and the inability of administrators to cope with these and other problems – they see their tax money being wasted and the whole purpose of the schools perverted.

Few citizens take the time and trouble to inquire into the causes of these difficulties, or to appraise objectively the merits of the case from the educators' point of view. The end result, consequently, is likely to be another vote cast against the new bond issue or next year's budget.

Up to this point in history, the majority of citizens have been quite willing to take the word of the school board and of the teachers and administrators that the schools are doing a good job. They have looked with pride on the community's school buildings and its winning football or basketball teams. These have been good enough to convince many that the local schools are good. But evidence in the present study indicates that this way of judging the quality of education may be in for a change.

Most would like to have more objective data on student achievement. In fact, the proportion who would like to have national tests administered in the local schools as a way to measure student progress and achievement and to compare progress with other schools is at a high level, as reported in this study.

One other fact needs to be pointed out. More than half of all parents of children in the schools today have had the advantage of some high school or college education. They can fall back on their own educational experience as a way to judge the progress of their children, something that was not possible a generation or two ago.

The well-educated parent is pro-education. He is the one most likely to vote in a school election, and he is most likely to vote yes on financial issues. Yet he is also likely to be more critical of school policies and the achievement or lack of achievement shown by his own children.

The public has an appetite for more information about the schools and what they are doing or trying to do. If the schools hope to avoid financial difficulties in the years ahead, they need to give far greater attention to this task of informing the public. And it isn't simply a matter of "selling" present policies. Public relations is a two-way street. It is important to tell the public about the schools, but it is also incumbent upon the schools to listen to the public's views and after serious examination take steps to meet just criticisms.

The Major Problems

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the public schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Discipline	18	18	18	20	17
Integration/ segregation	17	19	14	14	21
Finances	17	14	20	23	12
Teachers	12	11	15	12	21
Facilities	11	8	14	11	24
Dope/drugs	11	10	12	12	13
Curriculum	6	5	8	4	11
Parents' lack of interest	3	3	3	3	1
Transportation	2	3	2	2	3
School board policies	2	2	3	1	—
School administration	1	*	2	1	3
Pupils' lack of interest	*	*	1	2	5
Miscellaneous	3	3	3	2	8
There are no problems	5	3	7	5	2
Don't know/ no answer	18	21	11	18	5
	126**	120**	133**	130**	146**

*Less than 1%.
**Totals exceed 100% because some respondents gave more than one answer.

How do you feel about the discipline in the local public schools — is it too strict, not strict enough, or just about right?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Too strict	2	2	2	2	15
Not strict enough	53	57	48	50	23
Just about right	31	21	47	37	60
Don't know/ no answer	14	20	3	11	2
	100	100	100	100	100

If [discipline] "not strict enough," ask: Who should assume more responsibility for correcting this situation?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Teachers	16	16	16	17	12
School administration	16	17	16	12	7
Parents	30	33	24	29	4
School board	6	6	5	8	2
Students	2	2	2	3	5
Others	2	3	1	*	—
Don't know	2	2	*	2	1
	74**	79**	64**	71**	31**

*Less than 1%.
**Totals exceed percentage replying "not strict enough" in previous questions because some respondents gave more than one answer.

Spanking and similar forms of physical punishment are permitted in the lower grades of some schools for children who do not respond to other forms of discipline. Do you approve or disapprove of this practice?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Approve	62	60	66	66	40
Disapprove	33	34	29	31	56
No opinion	5	6	5	3	4
	100	100	100	100	100

Marijuana and other drugs are increasingly being used by students. Do you think it is a serious problem in your public schools?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Yes	64	69	56	69	39
No	22	16	31	18	59
Don't know	14	15	13	13	2
	100	100	100	100	100

Do you feel that the local public schools are doing a good job of teaching the bad effects of drug use?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Yes	39	34	47	39	49
No	25	26	24	24	45
Don't know	36	40	29	37	6
	100	100	100	100	100

Have there been any demonstrations protesting school policies or procedures in your public schools during this present school year?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Yes	19	18	19	18	39
No	64	56	75	74	59
Don't know	17	26	6	8	2
	100	100	100	100	100

Teacher and Administrator Accountability

Would you like to see the students in the local schools be given national tests so that their educational achievement could be compared with students in other communities?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Yes	75	74	75	80	76
No	16	14	19	15	23
No opinion	9	12	6	5	1
	100	100	100	100	100

Do you think the students here would get higher scores than students in similar communities, or not so high?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Our students higher	21	18	25	21	26
Our students not so high	15	15	18	14	19
About the same	44	44	40	49	47
Don't know	20	23	17	16	8
	100	100	100	100	100

Should each teacher be paid on the basis of the quality of his work or should all teachers be paid on a standard scale basis?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Quality of work	58	57	61	52	59
Standard scale basis	36	36	35	43	39
No opinion	6	7	4	5	2
	100	100	100	100	100

Would you favor or oppose a system that would hold teachers and administrators more accountable for the progress of students?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Favor	67	66	68	71	65
Oppose	21	21	21	19	29
No opinion	12	13	11	10	6
	100	100	100	100	100

Many states have "tenure" laws, which means that a teacher cannot be fired except by some kind of court procedure. Are you for giving teachers tenure or are you against tenure?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
For	35	38	29	28	30
Against	53	48	60	62	61
No opinion	12	14	11	10	9
	100	100	100	100	100

Have teacher organizations gained too much power over their own salaries and working conditions?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Yes	26	27	25	24	17
No	53	49	58	57	72
No opinion	21	24	17	19	11
	100	100	100	100	100

How do you feel about having guidance counselors in the public schools? Do you think they are worth the added cost?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Yes, worth it	73	69	79	79	83
No, not worth it	16	17	14	12	16
No opinion	11	14	7	9	1
	100	100	100	100	100

Student Power

Should high school students have more say about what goes on within the school on matters such as curriculum? teachers? school rules? student dress?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Curriculum					
Yes	38	36	40	42	83
No	53	53	55	51	15
No opinion	9	11	5	7	2
	100	100	100	100	100
Teachers					
Yes	22	22	22	20	53
No	72	70	74	76	43
No opinion	6	8	4	4	4
	100	100	100	100	100
School rules					
Yes	36	34	38	39	77
No	58	58	58	58	22
No opinion	6	8	4	3	1
	100	100	100	100	100
Student dress					
Yes	37	35	40	32	76
No	57	57	56	64	23
No opinion	6	8	4	4	1
	100	100	100	100	100

Financial Support

Suppose the local public schools said they needed much more money. As you feel at this time, would you vote to raise taxes for this purpose, or would you vote against raising taxes for this purpose?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
For	37	35	43	37
Against	56	57	53	58
Don't know/ no answer	7	8	4	5
	100	100	100	100

It has been suggested that state taxes be increased for everyone in order to let the state government pay a greater share of school expense and to reduce local property taxes. Would you favor an increase in state taxes so that real estate taxes could be lowered on local property?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
For	54	54	53	61
Against	34	34	36	32
No opinion	12	12	11	7
	100	100	100	100

Tax Aid for Parochial and Private Schools

It has been proposed that some government tax money be used to help parochial schools make ends meet. How do you feel about this? Do you favor or oppose giving some government tax money to help parochial schools?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents	High School Juniors & Seniors
	%	%	%	%	%
Favor	48	47	47	59	56
Oppose	44	44	47	33	36
No opinion	8	9	6	8	8
	100	100	100	100	100

In some nations, the government allots a certain amount of money for each child for his education. The parents can then send the child to any public, parochial, or private school they choose. Would you like to see such an idea adopted in this country?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents	High School Juniors & Seniors
	%	%	%	%	%
Favor	43	43	41	48	66
Oppose	46	46	48	40	27
No opinion	11	11	11	12	7
	100	100	100	100	100

Sex Education in the Schools

Do you approve or disapprove of schools giving courses in sex education?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents	High School Juniors & Seniors
	%	%	%	%	%
Approve	65	61	72	71	89
Disapprove	28	32	22	22	8
No opinion	7	7	6	7	3
	100	100	100	100	100

Would you approve or disapprove if these courses discussed birth control?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents	High School Juniors & Seniors
	%	%	%	%	%
Approve	56	52	60	63	82
Disapprove	35	38	32	28	12
No opinion	9	10	8	9	6
	100	100	100	100	100

Some girls get married before they are through high school. If they become pregnant, should they be permitted to attend?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents	High School Juniors & Seniors
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	46	45	49	46	57
No	47	47	46	48	38
No opinion	7	8	5	6	5
	100	100	100	100	100

Change and Innovation

Do you feel that the local public schools are not interested enough in trying new ways and methods or are they *too ready* to try new ideas?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents	High School Juniors & Seniors
	%	%	%	%	%
Not interested enough	20	21	20	16	43
Too ready to try new ideas	21	20	21	25	19
Just about right	32	25	42	36	34
Don't know	27	34	17	23	4
	100	100	100	100	100

Do you think the school curriculum in your community needs to be changed to meet today's needs or do you think it already meets today's needs?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents	High School Juniors & Seniors
	%	%	%	%	%
Needs to be changed	31	31	33	28	58
Already meets needs	46	36	59	57	41
No opinion	23	33	8	15	1
	100	100	100	100	100

Year-Around Schools

To utilize school buildings to the full extent, would you favor keeping the schools open the year around? Parents could chose which three of the four quarters of the year their children would attend. Do you approve or disapprove of this idea?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Approve	42	44	39	36	40
Disapprove	49	45	56	57	58
No opinion	9	11	5	7	2
	100	100	100	100	100

Attitudes Toward Getting More Information About the Public Schools

Would you like to know more about the public schools in this community?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Yes	54	48	62	54	51
No	44	50	36	41	48
Don't know/ no answer	2	2	2	5	1
	100	100	100	100	100

Student Self-Assessment

How would you appraise your ability to convey your thoughts in writing? read with speed and comprehension? speak correctly, fluently, effectively? develop new ideas, new solutions?

	All Students				
	Excellent %	Above Average %	Average %	Below Average %	Poor %
Convey your thoughts in writing	7	28	60	4	1
Read with speed and comprehension	5	34	48	12	1
Speak correctly, fluently, effectively	7	28	57	8	—
Develop new ideas, new solutions	8	35	50	7	—

Would you say that your vocabulary is excellent, above average, average, below average, poor?

All students	4	26	62	8	—

Chapter 4
The Third Annual Poll, 1971

Events of the Year in Education

How people will pay for education has been a troubling question for American communities since the 17th century. The answer over the years became ingrained: We will pay for our public schools primarily through a tax on local property. Even though the states began contributing increasing amounts for education and the federal government began to add its mite, local property taxes remained the principal source of public school support.

Theorists and scholars have attacked this arrangement for decades. But little happened until John Serrano, a parent and taxpayer in California, decided it was time to challenge the practice in the courts. By the time the case reached the California Supreme Court, Serrano's arguments had been honed to a fine edge: Heavy reliance on local property created inequities between rich and poor school districts and should be altered or abolished.

Agreed, said the California Supreme Court in 1971. In legal and constitutional terms, the court said that relying primarily on the traditional local property tax to pay for schools "may deprive children of equal protection under law, an action contrary to the Fourteenth Amendment." Nailing down the decision, the court added: "California's system of school support cannot withstand Constitutional challenge and must fall before the equal protection clause."

The *Serrano* decision shook the foundations of American school finance. It did not rule out the use of property taxes for schools, but it prompted states and school districts to take a new look at school support. State legislatures beefed up existing equalization funds or enacted new ones. In a score of states, parents and taxpayers launched legal actions against "improper reliance" on local property taxes for school support. Groups formed in nearly every part of the country to "untie the cost and quality of public education from the accident of a locality's taxable wealth."

The sharp debates over school finance did not diminish the winds of innovation for the curriculum, teaching, and learning. John P. Marland, newly appointed U.S. Commissioner of Education, called on the nation's schools to set plans for educating all students – beginning with grade one – for productive work.

He called his proposal career education for all Americans. He pushed his campaign throughout the year in speeches, interviews, and articles. He said, "general education is an abomination," and he considered vocational education too narrow a concept. His goal was to encourage school districts to offer courses and programs for career preparation, beginning in grade one, so that every high school graduate would be equipped with a saleable skill or qualified to enter college. ("College education," he said, "is also a career.")

Using close to $1 billion at his disposal, Marland led his U.S. Office of Education staff in developing "pilot programs" and encouraged school systems to serve as models for career education. And he called on each state education agency to develop, test, and demonstrate at least one career education project.

While a small number of school districts responded to Marland's challenge, a far larger number became interested in another practice, one that originated in Britain: the open classroom.

The most quoted description of the open classroom came from an official British document: "In open classrooms, children are taught to work independently and in groups in an environment planned by the teacher to permit choices of learning activities and instructional materials. Students do not follow fixed curriculums." To this definition, American educators added that the open classroom is child-centered, humane, personalized, free of lock-step instruction, and structured only in the sense that children are guided by teachers toward school-made objectives.

While some educators said open education was a fad, others said it was the new educational wave. One count during the year showed that some 7,000 schools were experimenting with the idea. Isolated farm towns, ghetto schools, and wealthy suburban districts adopted the practice with almost equal fervor.

Despite sporadic and hopeful signs of change, 1971 was a year of trouble for education.

In an effort to curb inflation, President Nixon instituted an emergency price-wage freeze. In line with this action, the federal government instructed school boards and colleges not to pay increases in teacher salaries contracted for 1971-72. Dismay and anger swept through the ranks of teachers, college instructors, and other education employees. Teacher unions and associations filed suit against the government to demand that teacher salary increases be paid; the government, in turn, filed suits against school boards that insisted on paying teacher increases. Little came of these legal maneuvers as, in time, inflation abated and Nixon's emergency moves lapsed.

However, the financial crisis that had gripped big city school systems continued unabated. The crisis was caused partly by inflation and partly by refusal of voters to approve requests for higher school levies. Dayton, Ohio, schools, for example, closed their doors for a short time because voters turned down four different tax levy efforts. Independence, Missouri, closed its classrooms for two weeks after voters rejected seven tax levies in 18 months. Also struggling to

survive were school systems in Philadelphia (probably hardest hit); in Boston; in Hartford, Connecticut; and in Portland, Maine. In fact, nearly every American city enrolling 100,000 or more students reduced teaching and specialized staff and cut back art, music, guidance, industrial arts, and vocational and physical education offerings. They shortened the school day and the school year. They rolled back construction and maintenance.

A suggested answer to the financial plight of big cities (as well as other school districts in trouble) came from the National Educational Finance Project, which in 1971 completed a four-year study. Its proposal: States must pay 60% of the cost of education; the federal government, 30%; local districts, 10%.

Two issues affecting public education were debated with intense fervor during the year, and both involved President Nixon.

The first of these had to do with the merits of transporting students to achieve integration. Large numbers of people, including blacks and liberals, believed that the school bus should be used to reduce or eliminate segregation. Others were opposed to the idea – and so busing became a social issue, racial issue, emotional issue, legal issue, educational issue, and a legislative and political issue. President Nixon "made it perfectly clear" that he opposed busing "for the sake of social justice." His statements and views added fuel to the debating fires throughout the year – and nothing was settled.

The second major issue was whether the federal government should begin support for early education and child care. Mr. Nixon himself had indicated interest in such a program (in his annual messages to Congress, for example). Following debates in Congress and in communities across the nation, Congress finally enacted an early education and child-care measure ($100 million for the first year, $2 billion for the second year). The plan proved too radical and expensive for the President. He vetoed it. Efforts to override the veto failed and the idea – which had been called "the most important social legislation since Social Security" by its friends, and "a monstrosity that would federalize the American family" by its enemies – was snuffed out.

Poll Findings

The third annual survey dealt at some length with the problems of school financing and particularly with ways in which the public would be willing to see economies effected. Gallup called this emphasis fortuitous; 1971 was the first and only year in which the public has identified finance as the biggest problem facing local public schools. It was so perceived by 23% of respondents. Discipline, which is reported as the biggest problem in 16 of the 20 surveys summarized in this book, fell to third place in terms of mentions. Problems of racial integration/segregation were second, as they were in 1970.

It is worth noting that high school juniors and seniors (polled for the second time in 1971), as well as parents with children in the public schools, cited the problems of integration/segregation less often than did adults who had no children in school and hence drew many of their conclusions from press and television coverage. This latter group believed integration to be the top problem (see table below).

The Major Problems

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the *public* schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Finances	23	22	24	21	9
Integration/ segregation	21	26	16	14	17
Discipline	14	13	14	23	14
Facilities	13	10	17	20	18
Dope/drugs	12	11	13	9	19
Teachers' lack of interest/ ability	5	4	5	12	7
Teachers (general)	6	4	8	5	5
Parents' lack of interest	4	3	5	5	*
School administration	3	3	3	7	3
Curriculum	3	3	2	5	5
Pupils' lack of interest	2	2	2	—	3
Vandalism	2	2	2	*	6
Disrespect for teachers	2	2	1	*	1
School board policies	1	*	2	*	1
Using new up-to-date methods	1	*	2	*	*
We have no problems	4	3	6	*	3
Miscellaneous	6	6	5	9	14
Don't know/ no answer	12	16	8	10	2

*Less than 1%

Strengths of the Schools

To accentuate the positive (after asking people to name "problems" in the schools), Gallup asked what aspects of the public schools are perceived to be particularly good. Teachers, the curriculum, and the schools' facilities head the list. Note that high school juniors and seniors in particular viewed the teachers and the curriculum as school strengths; they also liked the extracurricular activities.

In your own opinion, in what ways are your local *public* schools particularly good?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Teachers	21	17	27	22	27
Curriculum	15	10	22	18	28
Facilities	9	6	13	13	10
Up-to-date teaching methods	5	4	7	3	1
Extracurricular activities	3	2	5	5	14
No racial conflicts	3	3	4	3	3
Small school/ classes	2	2	3	2	3
Good administration	2	2	3	3	*
Good student-teacher realtionships	2	1	3	*	4
Parents are interested/ participate	2	*	3	4	—
Discipline	1	1	1	*	2
Transportation system	1	*	2	—	*
Equal opportunity for all	1	1	1	4	*
Nothing good	7	7	7	13	8
Miscellaneous	4	4	6	2	10
Don't know/ no answer	27	38	12	23	10

*Less than 1%.

Financing the Schools

A series of questions related to school finance began with one asking respondents to indicate, in a list of 16 possible economies, which they would approve. Interestingly enough, a majority favored only three of the suggested economies: 1) reducing the number of administrative personnel, 2) cancelling subjects that do not enroll a minimum number (unspecified) of students, and 3) running schools on a 12-month basis.

Rejected, usually by resounding majorities, were:

- reducing the number of teachers by increasing class size;
- cutting all teacher salaries by a set percentage;
- reducing special services such as speech, reading, and hearing therapy;
- reducing janitorial and maintenance services;
- cutting kindergarten;
- eliminating extracurricular activities (including athletics);
- reducing the number of subjects offered;
- reducing classroom supplies and materials;
- using outdated textbooks;
- charging rent for textbooks heretofore provided free;
- eliminating twelfth grade;
- making parents responsible for transporting their children;
- reducing the number of counselors.

Suppose your local school board were "forced" to cut some things from school costs because there is not enough money. I am going to read you a list of many ways that have been suggested for reducing school costs. Will you tell me, in the case of each one, whether your opinion is favorable or unfavorable.

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Reduce the number of teachers by increasing class sizes.					
Favorable	11	12	9	14	8
Unfavorable	79	72	88	86	91
No opinion	10	16	3	—	1
	100	100	100	100	100
Cut all teachers' salaries by a set percentage.					
Favorable	12	13	11	14	15
Unfavorable	77	70	85	84	80
No opinion	11	17	4	2	5
	100	100	100	100	100
Cut out after-school activities like bands, clubs, athletics, etc.					
Favorable	23	22	23	31	8
Unfavorable	68	64	74	68	89
No opinion	9	14	3	1	3
	100	100	100	100	100
Have the schools run on a 12-month basis with three-month vacations for students, one month for teachers.					
Favorable	47	45	47	57	37
Unfavorable	38	33	46	34	58
No opinion	15	22	7	9	5
	100	100	100	100	100
Make parents responsible for getting children to and from school.					
Favorable	39	41	36	48	27
Unfavorable	51	43	62	51	68
No opinion	10	16	2	1	5
	100	100	100	100	100
Cut out kindergarten.					
Favorable	19	18	21	23	24
Unfavorable	69	64	75	72	71
No opinion	12	18	4	5	5
	100	100	100	100	100
Charge rent for all textbooks instead of providing them free.					
Favorable	34	33	33	47	33
Unfavorable	56	52	63	51	65
No opinion	10	15	4	2	2
	100	100	100	100	100
Cut out the twelfth grade by covering in three years what is now covered in four.					
Favorable	29	31	26	28	45
Unfavorable	58	51	69	65	53
No opinion	13	18	5	7	2
	100	100	100	100	100

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Cancel any subjects that do not have the minimum number of students registered.					
Favorable	52	51	52	60	53
Unfavorable	35	31	42	35	45
No opinion	13	18	6	5	2
	100	100	100	100	100
Reduce the number of subjects offered.					
Favorable	30	30	29	32	17
Unfavorable	57	50	68	65	82
No opinion	13	20	3	3	1
	100	100	100	100	100
Reduce janitorial and maintenance services.					
Favorable	15	15	14	16	19
Unfavorable	72	67	80	78	77
No opinion	13	18	6	6	4
	100	100	100	100	100
Keep present textbooks and library books although it may mean using outdated materials.					
Favorable	20	20	20	14	16
Unfavorable	68	63	76	82	81
No opinion	12	17	4	4	3
	100	100	100	100	100
Reduce the amount of supplies and materials teachers use in classrooms.					
Favorable	26	27	22	31	26
Unfavorable	58	51	70	60	73
No opinion	16	22	8	9	1
	100	100	100	100	100
Reduce the number of counselors on the staff.					
Favorable	32	31	33	40	28
Unfavorable	49	42	58	49	70
No opinion	19	27	9	11	2
	100	100	100	100	100
Reduce special services, such as speech, reading, and hearing therapy.					
Favorable	10	10	9	9	13
Unfavorable	80	74	89	89	84
No opinion	10	16	2	2	3
	100	100	100	100	100
Reduce the number of administrative personnel.					
Favorable	50	48	50	55	43
Unfavorable	32	27	41	32	52
No opinion	18	25	9	13	5
	100	100	100	100	100

Was this unwillingness to bite the bullet in school economy balanced by a willingness to vote tax increases? As the table below shows, no. At least not if the local public schools said they needed more money. However, the percentage willing to vote increases rose from 37% in 1970 to 40% in 1971 (an insignificant figure statistically but in the right direction).

Suppose the local *public* schools said they needed much more money. As you feel at this time, would you vote to raise taxes for this purpose, or would you vote against raising taxes for this purpose?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
For	40	37	44	37	45
Against	52	53	49	59	49
No opinion	8	10	7	4	6
	100	100	100	100	100

Possible New Sources, New Expertise

It has been suggested that state taxes be increased for everyone in order to let the state government pay a greater share of school expense and to reduce local property taxes. Would you favor an increase in state taxes so that real estate taxes could be lowered on local property?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
For	46	43	50	46	50
Against	37	36	38	46	31
No opinion	17	21	12	8	19
	100	100	100	100	100

Would you favor or oppose the idea of having your school board hire management experts to look into the costs of local schools to see if the educational goals could be achieved at less cost?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Favor	54	49	61	67	69
Oppose	31	30	33	24	23
Don't know	15	21	6	9	8
	100	100	100	100	100

Fund Raising in the Public Schools

Does your child bring money from home to pay for anything, except lunch, in school? [Asked only of parents of school children]

	National Totals %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Yes	59	60	56	76
No	39	38	37	24
Don't know	2	2	7	—
	100	100	100	100
If "yes," for what?				
Books	9	19	27	30
Supplies for classes (general)	7	17	17	24

	National Totals %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Travel expenses for field trips	5	11	11	7
Athletic fees/equipment	3	6	6	11
School newspaper/school-related newspaper	3	7	2	7
Fees for special programs	3	8	5	4
Club dues/class dues	2	5	3	16
Parties/dances	2	4	3	2
Charitable contributions/ events	2	3	6	3
General school activities	1	3	4	5
Miscellaneous	9	20	12	26

Do you think such fees should be charged?

Yes	47	47	46	56
No	10	11	10	17
No opinion	2	2	—	3
	59	60	56	76

In some schools, teachers and students have fund-raising events to finance special projects for school equipment, after-school activities, and the like. Do you think it is a good idea or a poor idea for the schools to permit these events?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Good idea	84	81	88	90	97
Poor idea	11	12	10	8	3
No opinion	5	7	2	2	—
	100	100	100	100	100

Teacher Accountability: Performance Contracts and Vouchers

Financial problems and questions of accountability go hand in hand. In the early Seventies, people were perplexed by mounting school costs and they wanted to be sure they were getting their money's worth. The performance contracting movement seemed to offer an answer. In performance contracts – made by school authorities with entities offering instructional services – a fixed amount of money was paid, but only if students met specified achievement goals. As the data below show, people were attracted by the performance contracting idea; but at this point it was so new that 23% of the respondents hadn't made up their minds. (Before they could do so, the movement was dead of causes too complex to deal with here.)

In some public schools, educational companies are given contracts to put in new methods to teach the children in elementary schools certain basic skills, such as how to read. These are called "performance contracts." If the children don't reach a certain level of achievement, the company doesn't get paid for those children who fail to reach the standard. Would you like to have such contracts made here, in this community, if the overall school costs remain about the same.

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Yes	49	44	55	58	57
No	28	25	33	24	33
No opinion	23	31	12	18	10
	100	100	100	100	100

Most so-called voucher systems seek to promote parental choice among public, private, and parochial schools by reducing or eliminating cost differentials. They purport to introduce accountability into the parent-school relationship: the schools with the most to offer should reap the vouchers. When Gallup first asked a question about this system in 1970, he did so without using the word "voucher." When the word was used, as in the question below, results were much the same. People opposed the idea by a thin margin in both years.

In some nations, the government allots a certain amount of money for each child for his education. The parents can then send the child to any public, parochial, or private school they choose. This is called the "voucher system." Would you like to see such an idea adopted in this country?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Favor	38	34	39	66	58
Oppose	44	40	51	31	35
No opinion	18	26	10	3	7
	100	100	100	100	100

Gallup saw further evidence that people want assurance that they are getting their money's worth from the schools in responses to the following question:

Would you like to see the students in the local schools be given national tests so that their educational achievement could be compared with students in other communities?

The results: 70% favored, 21% opposed, and 9% had no opinion. These findings were substantially the same as those found in the 1970 survey. "In the absence of other evidence," Gallup said, "people will most certainly accept performance on national tests [as proof of a school's worth]."

Parent Accountability

When some children do poorly in school, some people place the blame on the children, some on the children's home life, some on the school, and some on the teachers. Of course, all of these things share the blame, but where would you place the *chief* blame?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Children	14	11	17	14	51
Home life	54	58	49	44	25
School	6	6	6	14	5
Teachers	8	7	10	8	11
No opinion	18	18	18	20	8
	100	100	100	100	100

Gallup considered it significant that parents with children in public school named the child's home life as the chief cause of a student's failure in school; they do not, as might be expected, shift the responsibility to the teachers or to the school or to the children.

It was equally interesting, he thought, that high school juniors and seniors did not absolve themselves from blame for doing poorly.

Gallup also considered it important that 81% of adults in the sample thought it a good idea for parents to attend classes on improving their children's behavior and interest in school work (see below). He said the response revealed a growing recognition of the role of parents in the educational process and the need for a new partnership between teachers and parents.

A suggestion has been made that parents of school children attend one evening class a month to find out what they can do at home to improve their children's behavior and increase their interest in school work. Is it a good idea or a poor idea?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Good idea	81	82	80	81	75
Poor idea	13	11	16	15	21
No opinion	6	7	4	4	4
	100	100	100	100	100

Racial Integration in the Schools

In 1971 the national consensus, judging by survey results, was that racial integration in the schools had improved the quality of education received by blacks, that it had not improved the quality of education received by whites, but that, on the whole, it had improved relations between blacks and whites. There were some interesting demographic differences, however, as the fourth table below shows.

How do you feel about school integration?

Do you feel it has improved the quality of education received by black students?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Yes	43	39	48	51	56
No	31	31	31	33	31
Don't know	26	30	21	16	13
	100	100	100	100	100

Do you feel it has improved the quality of education received by white students?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Yes	23	21	26	30	35
No	51	48	54	53	47
Don't know	26	31	20	17	18
	100	100	100	100	100

Do you feel it has improved relations between blacks and whites or has it worked against better relations?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Improved relations	40	36	44	49	59
Worked against	35	35	35	39	28
No opinion	25	29	21	12	13
	100	100	100	100	100

Same question, answers by different categories.

	Improved Relations %	Worked Against %	No Opinion %
Sex			
Men	40	37	23
Women	40	33	27
Race			
White	37	37	26
Nonwhite	63	15	22
Education			
Elementary grades	26	43	31
High school incomplete	36	37	27
High school complete	37	38	25
Technical, trade, or business school	41	34	25
College incomplete	49	32	19
College graduate	51	29	20
Occupation			
Business and professional	49	28	23
Clerical and sales	44	31	25
Farm	29	37	34
Skilled labor	40	39	21
Unskilled labor	40	34	26
Non-labor force	29	40	31
Age			
21 to 29 years	50	31	19
30 to 49 years	42	36	22
50 years and over	33	36	31
Religion			
Protestant	39	37	24
Roman Catholic	39	33	28
Jewish	48	35	17
All others	48	22	30
Region			
East	37	34	29
Midwest	40	36	24
South	41	39	20
West	42	29	29

	Improved Relations %	Worked Against %	No Opinion %
Income			
$15,000 and over	44	35	21
$10,000 to $14,999	41	35	24
$ 7,000 to $ 9,999	40	37	23
$ 5,000 to $ 6,999	42	33	25
$ 3,000 to $ 4,999	38	37	25
Under $3,000	31	35	34
Community size			
500,000 and over	41	37	22
50,000 to 499,999	43	33	24
25,000 to 49,999	32	61	7
Under 25,000	37	34	29

Discipline

Because of the great concern shown in previous polls about the problems of school discipline, an effort was made in the 1971 poll to probe more deeply into the public's conception of discipline (second table below). Gallup also found (third table) that people overwhelmingly believed that the need for disciplinary measures tends to disappear when students become genuinely interested in learning. Finally, he asked what the people would prefer to do with students who have serious behavior problems and disturb other students. The answers (fourth table) show that people regard punitive measures as much less effective than remedial measures.

How do you feel about the discipline in the local public schools — is it too strict, not strict enough, or just about right?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Too strict	3	3	3	—	22
Not strict enough	48	47	47	58	23
Just about right	33	26	46	29	53
Don't know	16	24	4	13	2
	100	100	100	100	100

If *"not strict enough"*: Can you tell me what you mean? In what ways is discipline not strict enough?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Teachers lack authority	11	10	12	14	2
Students have too much freedom	11	11	12	15	7
Disrespect for teachers	6	7	4	8	4
Rules are not enforced	3	4	2	3	4
Dress code is too liberal	3	2	3	4	*
Vandalism	2	2	2	5	*
Parents not interested in school affairs	2	1	3	5	*
Miscellaneous	3	3	3	5	*
Don't know/ no answer	3	3	4	2	*

*Less than 1%.

Some people say that if the schools and the teachers interest the children in learning, most disciplinary problems disappear. Do you agree or disagree?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Agree	76	75	76	78	81
Disagree	18	17	20	20	18
No opinion	6	8	4	2	1
	100	100	100	100	100

Some students are not interested in school. Often they keep other students from working in school. What should be done in these cases?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Special classes for all who are not interested	29	26	34	27	27
Expel them	12	12	12	13	22
Offer better/ more interesting: curriculum/ teaching methods	11	11	10	13	14
Special counseling	9	9	10	11	13
Harsher discipline	9	9	10	7	4
Vocational training	8	8	7	9	8
Make their parents responsible	7	6	7	8	3
Put in school for problem students	6	5	7	13	3
Teachers should take more interest in such students	4	3	5	3	4
Miscellaneous	5	5	5	4	5
Don't know/ no answer	18	21	16	14	14

Innovation and Change

Were public schools in the early Seventies trying too many educational innovations? Or were they falling behind the times? The public was about equally divided on this abstract question. But they were ready to consider specific suggestions for change on their merits, or so Gallup concluded. The first question probed the generalized attitude toward change; the next two asked about specific changes being contemplated.

In the schools in your community, do you think too many educational changes are being tried, or not enough?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents	High School Juniors & Seniors
	%	%	%	%	%
Too many	22	21	23	24	14
Not enough	24	23	26	33	53
About right	32	24	44	28	31
Don't know	22	32	7	15	2
	100	100	100	100	100

In some schools, time spent by students in classrooms is being reduced to give more time for independent study, that is, carrying out learning projects on their own. Should the local schools give more time to independent study than they presently do, or should they give less time?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents	High School Juniors & Seniors
	%	%	%	%	%
More	31	30	31	39	56
Less	22	18	26	28	18
About right now	25	21	32	25	20
No opinion	22	31	11	8	6
	100	100	100	100	100

Some people feel that too much emphasis is placed in the high schools on preparing students for college and not enough emphasis on preparing students for occupations that do not require a college degree. Do you agree or disagree?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents	High School Juniors & Seniors
	%	%	%	%	%
Agree	68	68	69	67	61
Disagree	23	21	25	27	35
No opinion	9	11	6	6	4
	100	100	100	100	100

Chapter 5
The Fourth Annual Poll, 1972

Events of the Year in Education

Almost imperceptibly, enrollments began to drop in public schools. Statisticians noted the first drop in September, when some 500,000 fewer children enrolled in public and private elementary grades (K-8) than the year before. Secondary enrollments continued rising but at a reduced rate.

Demographers began making projections of enrollments for the next 10 years. What they saw was more of the same – fewer students in the elementary grades and an end to the growth of secondary enrollments. "Declining enrollments" became the subject of discussion among administrators and those in the private sector who depend on the school market. Seeking explanations, statisticians came upon the unmistakable trends of declining birth rates, the intention of women to have fewer children, and the popularity of smaller families.

Projections also showed that declining enrollments would result in growing unemployment among teachers. The National Education Association estimated that about 110,000 qualified 1972 graduates were unable to find teaching jobs in the public schools. "This is a serious national problem," said the NEA, "a waste of talent."

Despite the enrollment decline, the total for the nation's public and private schools and colleges stood at a record 60.4 million – the accumulated result of booming enrollments during the previous decade.

The schools and colleges needed help. Some measure of new assistance was promised by the Education Amendments of 1972. An omnibus bill, the measure authorized $20 billion over the next three years to elementary and secondary schools, community colleges, colleges and universities, Indian education, and occupational and adult education. But the Nixon administration was in no hurry to ask for the funds. As the year ended, hardly a start had been made in allocating the newly authorized funds.

In fact, Congress was having trouble getting money for long-established education programs. Twice during the year (first in August, then in November) President Nixon vetoed the regular school money bills, charging that they exceeded his requests and would feed inflationary fires. The action angered liberal members of the House and Senate and prompted a deluge of letters from state and local educators who said they could not plan their next year's programs when they had no federal funds to plan with. The federally supported programs continued to function under temporary extension resolutions. For months, chaos and confusion marked the budgetary picture, as Democrats in Congress were determined to defend their original money bills (totaling some $30 billion for the coming year) and Nixon was determined to keep spending at the lowest possible levels.

One development cheered educators during the year. Congress wrote a significant provision into the Education Amendments of 1972 creating, for the first time in U.S. history, a major agency to muster the power of research for the solution of pressing problems in education. This was to be the job of the newly created National Institute of Education (NIE), and for many educators the agency was a dream come true. The law charged the NIE to conduct basic and applied research and to carry on surveys, evaluations, experiments, and demonstrations. Many educators expected the NIE to discover new directions in teaching and learning, ways to increase teacher productivity, and methods to put technology to work in education.

The organized teaching profession was astir with hope and despair. Hope (for some, at least) came from the decision of two rival state teacher groups in New York State to unite. Involved in what was touted as "an historic development" were the AFL-CIO-affiliated United Teachers of New York and the NEA-affiliated New York State Teachers Association. The merger attracted national attention. Editorialists saw it as the first step toward a giant national teachers union, and commentators wondered whether the move would alarm the taxpayer and whether it would be good for the nation. The labor movement welcomed the action; the NEA was troubled by it, fearing that the AFL-CIO might, in the long run, swallow the teacher organizations.

There were, in fact, streaks of trouble and despair at the NEA's Washington headquarters. The NEA was in no mood for mergers because it faced financial, constitutional, and leadership problems.

For seven of the past nine years, the NEA ended each year with a deficit. In 1972 the deficit was about $1 million, the largest of any year. Among reasons for the deficit were a lag in state and local dues transmission to Washington and "inept financial management in some large state affiliates."

For more than two years, the NEA tried to put its house in order through new policies and practices. To this end, the NEA leadership worked for a new constitution and conducted constitutional convention (ConCon) sessions. A draft of the much-debated constitution was presented at the NEA's 1972 annual convention. Its supporters claimed the new constitution was "in tune with the times and provided correct directions for NEA's future." Opponents charged that the constitution, if adopted, would downgrade the professional staff at headquarters, would bring into being a new powerful president, and would lead the organization toward 100% unionization. Opponents also argued that the proposed constitution would

split the profession, isolating administrators from teachers. As the year ended, the outlook was for rejection.

Among those against the proposed constitution was Sam Lambert, head of NEA's headquarters staff for five years. In a remarkable speech at the NEA annual meeting in 1972 (his last), he lambasted his organization for "its drift toward totalitarian governance, fiscal disorder, and toward labor union practices." Following the angry speech, Lambert went into early retirement. It took months for the organization to find a replacement.

One aftermath of the NEA crisis came about as predicted. The nation's organized superintendents and principals parted ways with the NEA. During the year, the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) joined loosely into "an administrative team," moved out of the NEA building in Washington, and made their separate homes across the Potomac in Virginia.

Also in 1972, a new and controversial book caught the attention of educators. Called *Inequality, A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America* (Basic Books), it was a massive study by Christopher Jencks of the factors that make a difference in the lives of children.

Jencks, a professor at Harvard University, argued that the most stubborn kind of inequality is economic, and that neither better schooling, more schooling, nor different kinds of schooling will make much difference in reducing poverty in the United States. The evidence that Jencks amassed was used during the year in arguments about desegregation, busing, financing education, compensatory programs, and "deschooling America." What most reviewers and quoters of the book overlooked was that it was less of a study of education and more of economics and social policy. Jencks concluded that those who wanted economic and social equality should not look to the schools as a means for getting it. They should look to the establishment of "political control over the economic institutions that shape our society." That is what other countries usually call socialism. No wonder the book created one of the year's biggest controversies in education.

Poll Findings

The fourth Gallup education poll was the first of two in the 20-year series to include professional educators in the respondent sample.* Among a total of 1,614 adults interviewed were 270 educators (teachers and administrators), and their responses were separately tabulated. Although on many questions professional opinion was not significantly different from that of the general public, there were major differences in seven areas: major problems of the local public schools, tenure, blame for student failure, innovations such as schools without walls and nongraded schools, compulsory school attendance, the need for more tax revenues for education, and the best sources of tax revenue. These differences are revealed in the tables below.

As in 1971, lay respondents were asked to identify major problems of the local public schools and to point out what was right with those schools. Discipline returned as the top problem, and again teachers and the curriculum were identified as the major strengths. Professional educators ranked discipline third, after finances (mentioned by 35%) and problems of integration/desegregation. They also gave a resounding vote of confidence to the curriculum, 42% citing it as a strength.

The Major Problems

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the *public* schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals N = 1,790 %	No Children In School 996 %	Public School Parents 698 %	Private School Parents 144 %	Professional Educators 270 %
Discipline	23	23	23	26	20
Integration/ segregation	18	20	14	17	23
Finances	19	17	22	16	35
Teachers	14	14	14	16	13
Facilities	5	4	7	4	11
Curriculum	5	4	5	4	12
Parents' lack of interest	6	6	6	3	18
Large school, large classes	10	9	10	15	5
Dope, drugs	4	4	4	3	11
There are no problems	2	3	2	2	8
Miscellaneous	9	8	11	12	12
Don't know/ no answer	12	13	12	9	4

What's Right with the Schools

In your opinion, in what ways are your local *public* schools particularly good?

	National Totals N = 1,790 %	No Children In School 996 %	Public School Parents 698 %	Private School Parents 144 %	Professional Educators 270 %
Teachers	19	15	28	13	29
Curriculum	21	16	28	15	42
Facilities	8	7	9	8	16
Up-to-date teaching method	5	4	8	6	12
Extra curricular activities	5	3	8	8	6

*On three occasions the questions used in a Gallup education poll have been delivered to a random sample of Phi Delta Kappa members by mail and the results have been reported in the *Phi Delta Kappan*. See "Kappans Answer Gallup Questions" (September 1971): 34; "Comparing Lay and Professional Opinion on Gallup Poll Questions" (September 1980): 48; and "Differences Between Educators and the Public on Questions of Education Policy" (December 1987): 294-96.

	National Totals N = 1,790 %	No Children In School 996 %	Public School Parents 698 %	Private School Parents 144 %	Professional Educators 270 %
No racial conflicts	7	7	6	4	11
Small school-small classes	3	2	5	1	4
Good administration	3	2	5	3	6
Good student/teacher relationships	4	2	6	4	6
Parents are interested, participate	2	1	3	3	3
Discipline	2	1	2	—	2
Transportation system		1	1	2	1
Equal opportunities for all	8	8	8	7	19
Close to home	1	1	2	3	1
Nothing is good	7	7	6	15	5
Miscellaneous	1	1	1	—	1
Don't know/no answer	33	43	19	35	5

The Goals of Education As the Public Sees Them

One of the chief purposes of the 1972 survey was to discover what the public regards as the main goals of schooling. Gallup noted that "most efforts to discover the public's ideas on the goals of education have ended in questionable findings because researchers have failed to distinguish between ends and means." To avoid this problem, the 1972 survey attempted to make a separation, dealing with ends first and with means later.

An open question (with two probes) was used to get at the public's ideas of the ultimate goals of education. This was the question asked:

People have different reasons why they want their children to get an education. What are the chief reasons that come to your mind?

After the person interviewed had answered this question, he was asked if he could think of anything else. One further attempt was made to see if he could add to his list.

Here are the responses and the percentages of respondents mentioning each in some form:

1. To get better jobs 44%
2. To get along better with people at all levels of society 43%
3. To make more money — achieve financial success 38%
4. To attain self-satisfaction 21%
5. To stimulate their minds 15%
6. Miscellaneous reasons 11%

These responses show that the public thinks of education largely in a pragmatic way. But this heavy emphasis on material goals, at the expense of those concerned with intellectual and artistic development, should come as no shock. Americans are a practical people who believe firmly that education is the royal road to success in life.

Is there a wide chasm between educational programs followed in the public schools and the programs to which the public attaches great importance? Some will view these tabulations as evidence that there is. Yet we have already seen that the public does not regard curricular problems as particularly serious. In fact, curriculum ranked at the top in the tabulation of school strengths.

After having sought to learn the public's views on the ultimate goals of education, the interviewers handed each respondent a card on which were listed nine specific programs for reaching educational goals.

Respondents were asked first about elementary school children.

Below are ratings of these programs based upon the number of mentions. The question was:

Which three of these educational programs [card list] would you like your local elementary schools (grades 1-6) to give *more attention* to:

1. Teaching students the skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic
2. Teaching students how to solve problems and think for themselves
3. Teaching students to respect law and authority
4. Teaching students how to get along with others
5. Teaching students the skills of speaking and listening
6. Teaching students vocational skills
7. Teaching students health and physical education
8. Teaching students about the world of today and yesterday (that is, history, geography, and civics)
9. Teaching students how to compete with others

Respondents were then asked the same question in relation to junior and senior high schools (grades 7-12). In order of mentions:

1. Teaching students to respect law and authority
2. Teaching students how to solve problems and think for themselves
3. Teaching students vocational skills
4. Teaching students how to get along with others
5. Teaching students the skills of speaking and listening
6. Teaching students about the world of today and yesterday (that is, history, geography, and civics)
7. Teaching students the skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic
8. Teaching students health and physical education
9. Teaching students how to compete with others

Voting Tax Increases

Suppose the local *public* schools said they needed much more money. As you feel at this time, would you vote to raise taxes for this purpose, or would you vote against raising taxes for this purpose.

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Private School Parents	Professional Educators
	N = 1,790	996	698	144	270
	%	%	%	%	%
For	36	35	37	38	67
Against	56	56	56	55	29
No opinion	8	9	7	7	4
	100	100	100	100	100

Higher State Taxes, Lower Property Taxes

It has been suggested that state taxes be increased for everyone in order to let the state government pay a greater share of school expense and to reduce local property taxes. Would you favor an increase in state taxes so that real estate taxes could be lowered on local property?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Private School Parents	Professional Educators
	N = 1,790	996	698	144	270
	%	%	%	%	%
For	55	56	54	51	68
Against	34	33	36	37	27
No opinion	11	11	10	12	5
	100	100	100	100	100

The Value-Added Tax

It has been suggested that a new kind of national sales tax, sometimes called a value-added tax, should be adopted to help reduce local property taxes that now support public schools. Do you favor or oppose such a tax?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Private School Parents	Professional Educators
	N = 1,790	996	698	144	270
	%	%	%	%	%
Favor	35	35	30	37	38
Oppose	51	50	54	51	53
No opinion	14	15	16	12	9
	100	100	100	100	100

New School Buildings

Are new school buildings more expensive than they need be?

A majority of citizens (53%) agreed that new schools are more expensive than they need be. Thirty-five percent took the opposite view; 12% had no opinion. The professional educators interviewed agreed with the majority viewpoint but by a narrower margin.

To shed light on the public's thinking about building costs, verbatim comments were recorded. They reveal the wide variety of reasons why the public believed that new schools are too expensive:

"I think they are putting too much fancy stuff in these new schools that kids don't need and don't appreciate."

"Far too much goes to architects for designing frills and not enough for basic needs."

"School boards want to build monuments. They forget that changes are going on all the time in education and that schools built today will be obsolete in 20 years. Why not build for 20 years instead of a century?"

"Unfortunately, schools are designed by people who make more money by making them elaborate; they are not designed by those who use them."

"The cost per foot of floor space for new schools here is higher than the cost of good office space. This proves to me that there is graft."

"Why not temporary and portable buildings? These can satisfy educational needs. All you need is a roof over your head and four walls."

"Our schools have a lot of things they don't need: rooms where teachers sit and smoke, wall-to-wall carpeting, air conditioners when the schools are not used in summer."

Those who hold the opposite view – that new school buildings are not too expensive – expressed their views in these typical comments:

"The extras spent on buildings are a good investment. They make the kids proud of their school."

"Poor children need to spend part of their day in nice surroundings. The extras spent on buildings are good for their morale."

"Part of the process of education depends on physical environment. In this respect beautiful buildings are important."

"Because of inflation and high construction costs, all buildings built today are too expensive."

Student Rights and Privileges

The 26th Amendment to the Constitution, passed in 1971, lowered the legal voting age from 21 to 18. The question arose over whether 18-year-olds, as full-fledged citizens, should not have more rights in school than other students. The public said "no" in resounding fashion, according to the 1972 education poll.

First, this question was asked, with results as indicated:

Generally speaking, do the local public school students in this community have too many rights and privileges, or not enough?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Private School Parents	Professional Educators
	N = 1,790	996	698	144	270
	%	%	%	%	%
Too many	41	41	40	40	33
Not enough	11	12	9	12	17
Just right	33	28	42	28	42
No opinion	15	19	9	20	8
	100	100	100	100	100

Then the following question was asked:

Should students who are 18 years of age, and now have the right to vote, have more rights and privileges than other students?

	National Totals N = 1,790 %	No Children In School 996 %	Public School Parents 698 %	Private School Parents 144 %	Professional Educators 270 %
Yes	21	24	17	19	24
No	73	71	77	76	73
Don't know	6	5	6	5	3
	100	100	100	100	100

Compulsory Attendance

Gallup observed that, in 1972, many professional educators thought that it makes little sense to require students to attend school when they are totally uninterested, get little of value from their school work, and all too often become a disrupting factor for other students.

This view, the findings reveal, was largely confined to educators. The public still thought of the schools in a custodial sense. This question was asked:

In each state children are required to go to school until they reach a certain age. If you were the one to decide, what would be the age in this state? Do you believe those youngsters not interested in school should be forced to attend elementary school (grades 1-6)? Junior and senior high school (grades 7-12)?

Leave School at Age:	Public %	Professional Educators %
14 years	2	7
15 years	1	3
16 years	28	42
17 years	11	8
18 years	42	23
19 years	8	4
No minimum age	—	4

Compulsory attendance at elementary school was universally approved. The public voted 91% in favor of this policy.

Compulsory attendance at junior and senior high school was also favored, by 73% in the case of the public, by 56% in the case of professional educators.

Starting Age for School

The proposal that young children start school at the age of 4 did not arouse much enthusiasm from the American public in 1972.

Interesting differences were found among different groups, however, as revealed in the percentages below:

Some educators have proposed that young children start school a year earlier — at the age of 4. Does this sound like a good idea or not?

	National %	Public School Parents %	Private School Parents %	Professional Educators %
Favor	32	32	41	40
Oppose	64	65	58	54
No opinion	4	3	1	6

The Nongraded School

Should a student be able to progress through the school system at his own speed and without regard to the usual grade levels? This would mean that he might study seventh-grade math but only fifth-grade English. Would you favor or oppose such a plan in the local schools?

	National Totals N = 1,790 %	No Children In School 996 %	Public School Parents 698 %	Private School Parents 144 %	Professional Educators 270 %
Favor	71	69	74	73	87
Oppose	22	22	22	22	11
No opinion	7	9	4	5	2
	100	100	100	100	100

The Year-Around School

To utilize school buildings to the full extent, would you favor keeping the school open year around? Each student would attend school for nine months over the course of a year. Do you approve or disapprove?

	National Totals N = 1,790 %	No Children In School 996 %	Public School Parents 698 %	Private School Parents 144 %	Professional Educators 270 %
Favor	35	35	30	37	38
Oppose	51	50	54	51	53
No opinion	14	15	16	12	9
	100	100	100	100	100

The School Without Walls

In most communities students can learn many things outside the school. Would you approve or disapprove if the schools here reduced the amount of classroom instruction to allow students to make greater use of the educational opportunities outside the school?

	National Totals N = 1,790 %	No Children In School 996 %	Public School Parents 698 %	Private School Parents 144 %	Professional Educators 270 %
Approve	56	60	49	63	72
Disapprove	34	29	43	29	26
No opinion	10	11	8	8	2
	100	100	100	100	100

Increasing the Child's Interest in School

Can anything be done by the school to increase your child's interest in going to school?

	Public School Parents N = 698 %	Private School Parents 144 %
Yes	42	30
No	46	51
Don't know	12	19
	100	100

Most parents said their children like to go to school. At the same time they had many ideas about how to make school more interesting. Here, in their verbatim comments, are some of their suggestions:

"Teachers could try much harder to interest students in the subjects they teach. Children can't judge how important something is. They must be told – and sold."

"I have found that if a teacher is enthusiastic about his subject the students will also be enthusiastic. And you can be sure if he isn't the students will be bored."

"More field trips, extra work, doing things they enjoy doing. You learn by doing."

"More discipline is needed to control the hoodlum element. Students can't be expected to learn when the school is in a state of chaos."

"There should be better communication between the teacher and the parent in order to make the parent more effective. The parent could then show more interest in the work the child is doing, and the child, as a result, would take more interest in school."

"My recipe would be to give more responsibility to the student and to select livelier teachers."

"Give the students more study freedom, better access to books. Let students decide what their interests are and then encourage them to follow up these interests."

"Some teachers are just plain boring. There should be some way to reward, with higher salaries, those who are able to interest students."

"Since sports have been cut out of our schools to save money, my son has lost interest in the school and in his work."

"Keep up the creative challenge all the time. School should expect more of every student – the poor as well as the good."

"In this community the kids are afraid to go to school. The bullies and problem makers should be put together and not allowed to bother other students."

"Schools should plan a whole series of special talks to get students to understand and appreciate the importance of what the school is trying to teach them.

Teacher Tenure

Most public school teachers have tenure; that is, after a two- or three-year trial period, they receive what amounts to a lifetime contract. Do you approve or disapprove of this policy?

	National Totals N = 1,790 %	No Children In School 996 %	Public School Parents 698 %	Private School Parents 144 %	Professional Educators 270 %
Approve	28	28	27	28	53
Disapprove	61	59	64	63	42
No opinion	11	13	9	9	5
	100	100	100	100	100

Parents' Meetings

Have you attended *any* meeting since last September where the chief topic was how you, as a parent, could increase the interest of your child(ren) in his (their) school work, how and when to do homework, and other such matters that show what can be done at home to help the child in school?

	Public School Parents N = 698 %	Private School Parents 144 %
Yes	37	41
No	61	56
Don't know	2	3
	100	100

Rating the School Board

Now, a question about the local school board. Does it work hard to improve the quality of education?

	National Totals N = 1,790 %	No Children In School 996 %	Public School Parents 698 %	Private School Parents 144 %	Professional Educators 270 %
Yes	59	54	66	58	67
No	19	18	21	19	25
No opinion	22	28	13	23	8
	100	100	100	100	100

Chapter 6
The Fifth Annual Poll, 1973

Events of the Year in Education

In 1973 there came to the fore two facts that troubled the conscience of the education community. The first was that despite rising concern for the education of children in need of special education – the physically or mentally handicapped – not enough was being done for them. The second was that the non-English-speaking child was being shortchanged by most school districts in the nation.

With increasing concern for the handicapped came a number of actions for the benefit of this large group of American students. Seven states set into motion machinery requiring local school boards to develop plans for special education. Eight states enacted new legislation with similar intentions. Equally significant was the fact that when local educators complained that it was too expensive for them to provide programs for the handicapped, a spate of court decisions insisted on compliance with all legislative mandates where they already existed.

The problem was much bigger than most educators and legislators had suspected. "Knock on any 10 doors on any street," said one specialist, "and behind at least one of them you'll find a child needing special education." Some 500,000 new teachers for the handicapped were needed, against a supply of only 175,000. New dollars, new materials, new equipment, new curriculum offerings – all were in great demand and in short supply. The moment of truth, one federal official said, had come to the American people about their handicapped children. And imbedded in that truth was the fact that, despite much effort, only about half the children needing special education had access to it.

The problem of the bilingual child was summed up by one witness before a Congressional committee in these words: "If I gave my testimony in Spanish or Chinese, not many of you lawmakers would know what I'm talking about. Well, many school systems require young children to sit for hours every day without understanding what's being taught or what is expected of them."

Efforts to help the children of America's polyglot peoples started in the 1960s, but the programs did little for the growing populations of Hispanics, Orientals, American Indians, and European immigrants. The inadequacies of effort were highlighted by a report that in 1973 the U.S. Office of Education supported only 213 bilingual projects, enrolling 230,000 children, with a sum of $35 million.

Bilingual education took on national importance when parents of 1,800 Chinese-speaking children in San Francisco brought their case to the U.S. Supreme Court, arguing that the exclusive use of English in classrooms deprived their children of their constitutional right to an education. The High Court agreed to hear the case (*Lau* v. *Nichols*) and thus, even before issuing a decision, launched a flurry of new programs for the bilingual student.

Two events of the year brought a chill – one spiritual, the other literal – to the nation's schools and colleges.

When the Watergate scandals broke into the open, the National Education Association spoke of "the outrage of teachers and students about the President's disregard for our high standards of morality." "The astounding events of Watergate," NEA's president wrote to President Nixon, "have struck the nation's classrooms like a thunderclap."

Teachers and school officials across the nation bemoaned student disillusionment with government and politicians. Speakers at education conventions and meetings described the "chill that has been cast on America's moral, ethical, and spiritual values." The positive side of Watergate was reflected in a reinvigorated interest in courses and units of learning dealing with the powers of the president, the role of political parties, and ethical standards for political leaders.

Then came the November mists and a winter of cold and discontent. Congress declared a national energy emergency and the Nixon administration ordered schools and colleges to cut fuel and power usage. The federal government placed school buses in the "essential mass transit" category and school and college buildings in "essential government services." These actions ensured that teaching and learning would go on during the energy crunch (as it was called), but only if schools and colleges reduced their fuel and power consumption by 7% to 15%.

School plant thermostats were turned down to 68° or below. School bus routes were curtailed, where possible. Turning off needless electric lights became a patriotic act. Maintenance personnel rushed for insulation material. Classrooms not essential for teaching or study were closed, as were school swimming pools. Hot water in shower rooms was reduced. The extra sweater for students and staff became a chief weapon against the cold.

Again, there were educational spinoffs from the energy crisis. From kindergartens to senior high school science classes, teachers and students developed new learning units on heat, light, and energy conservation. How to ward off colds, what to eat and what to wear during winter's chill, became topics for classroom projects.

Despite dramatic or aberrant developments in education, persistent and stubborn problems continued their grip on America's schools and colleges and the people operating them.

- Private school administrators, in desperate need of financial help, lost out when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that New York and Pennsylvania statutes providing financial as-

sistance to private and parochial schools violated the Constitution. By its action, the Court blocked yet another attempt to channel public funds to church-related schools.

- The National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, striving for what some called "teacher unity," took actions to begin moving toward merger. But the AFT refused to move out of its AFL-CIO affiliation and the NEA insisted that a new organization resulting from merger must be free to take its own positions and pursue its own objectives. Consequently, nothing much happened.
- The federal education machinery, trying to function in what most observers called an anti-education administration, sought to assume a positive role for America's schools and colleges. But it was hard going. Sidney P. Marland Jr. resigned his post as the highest education official in the land after only one year in office. He could not cope with President Nixon's vetoes of education appropriations and the impounding of education funds by the White House even after Congress had approved their expenditure.
- And the unyielding problem of how to pay for the public schools erupted in new controversy. The U.S. Supreme Court declared it constitutional for a state to rely on local property taxes to support public schools. By a five-to-four vote, the Justices ruled that the Texas school finance system, which relies on local property values, was constitutional even though it creates sharp differences in quality of education between rich and poor school districts. The *Rodriguez* case, as it was called, had the practical effect of wiping out the *Serrano* decision of the California Supreme Court.

Poll Findings

The fifth Gallup education poll dealt with several new themes as well as with topics already probed. Questions were asked about changes in attitudes toward the local public schools, career education, alternative schools, accountability (parents' right to sue if a child does not learn to read), why people move to the suburbs (are the schools important in the decision?), and the importance of schools to success in life.

For the second and last time, a separate sample of educators (teachers and administrators) was included. In 1972, 270 educators were interviewed; in this poll, 306 were interviewed.

Gallup considered a question about recent changes in overall attitude toward the public schools in one's community "one of the most revealing questions" asked in the series. The question was followed, in the case of people who said their opinions had changed, with a question about sources of opinion. Gallup concluded from an analysis of these data that the more respondents knew at firsthand about the public schools, the more favorable were their views; the less interested and less well-informed, the less favorable. Most important, he said, is the fact that persons who depend on the media for their information are most critical of the schools.

Parents with children in the public schools said they had become more favorable in their views of the public schools in recent years; those who had no children in school held the reverse opinion.

Professional educators were about evenly divided between those whose views had become more favorable and those whose views had become less favorable.

The questions and the data:

In recent years has your overall attitude toward the *public* schools in your community become more favorable or less favorable?

	National Totals N = 1,627 %	No Children In School 928 %	Public School Parents 620 %	Private School Parents 124 %	Professional Educators 306 %
Attitudes Toward Schools					
Becoming more favorable	32	25	42	31	39
Becoming less favorable	36	38	31	46	41
No change/ no opinion	32	37	27	23	20
	100	100	100	100	100

The following table provides a different kind of breakdown: by city size and area of the country.

Overall Attitude Toward Schools

	Percent Totals 100 %	More Favorable 32 %	Less Favorable 36 %	No Change 23 %	Don't Know 9 %
City Size					
500,000 and over	100	28	37	26	9
50,000 to 499,999	100	30	44	20	6
25,000 to 49,999	100	48	27	21	5
Under 25,000	100	33	32	24	11
Area of Country					
East	100	27	37	26	10
Midwest	100	35	34	22	9
South	100	34	35	23	8
West	100	30	41	23	6

The table below indicates sources of school information identified by *those who said their opinions about school quality have changed in recent years*. It supplements the earlier table reporting attitude changes of all respondents.

Attitude Change in Recent Years

	National Totals N = 1,627 %	More Favorable 515 %	Less Favorable 589 %	No Change 380 %	Don't Know 143 %
Sources of Information					
Newspapers	38	40	38	38	36
Radio and/or television	20	19	24	19	17
Students	43	45	47	41	23
School board/faculty	33	40	31	33	15
Parents of students	33	35	36	32	23
Other adults in community	23	23	24	22	17
Other	12	13	14	10	6
PTA	3	5	2	3	2
Undesignated	4	2	2	3	20

Comparing Today's Schools with Those of the Past

Related to the previous question but asked later in the poll was this one:

As you look on your own elementary and high school education, is it your impression that children today get a better — or worse — education than you did?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Private School Parents	Professional Educators
	N = 1,627	928	620	124	306
	%	%	%	%	%
Better	61	56	69	62	67
Worse	20	22	17	23	16
No difference	11	13	9	8	11
No opinion	8	9	5	7	6
	100	100	100	100	100

As the data show, all groups believed that children at that time were getting a better education than their parents did. The answer was "better" by a substantial margin. Those in a position to be best informed – parents with one or more children in the public schools – believed more than 3 to 1 that schools were better than in their own time. Even those who reported that in *recent* years their attitudes had become less favorable were still inclined to say that the schools were better than they were at an earlier period.

When asked to give reasons why they thought children of the day were getting a better – or worse – education than in earlier years, those who had children in the public schools gave these reasons, listed in order of mentions:

1. Wider variety of subjects offered
2. Better facilities/equipment
3. Better teaching methods
4. Better qualified teachers
5. Equal opportunities for all students

When those who said that education was inferior to that received in earlier years, the reasons offered for this view were:

1. Less discipline
2. Lower education standards and requirements
3. Less interest on the part of students
4. Less interest on the part of teachers
5. Too many irrelevant subjects offered

Were High Schools Getting Too Large?

In the Fifties and Sixties, James B. Conant, the former Harvard University president, studied U.S. high schools and argued persuasively that they should be large because only the large school could afford to have special courses in special subjects. Small high schools would not have enough students interested in these fields to warrant separate classes. Conant's work had much to do with the consolidation movement of the period.

In the 1973 poll, Gallup found a tide of opinion running against Conant's recommendations. The fifth poll showed that all groups interviewed, including professional educators, believed that high schools were too large.

Gallup said, "The ideal size of a school usually gets related in the typical person's mind to the size of school he attended. To minimize this factor, a question was designed that sought to remove the issue at least one step from the respondent's own experience. The question that proved best, after testing, was:"

In some areas of the U.S., new towns and cities are being built. This gives city planners the opportunity to build school facilities that are "just right" in size. What do you think would be the "ideal" number of students in a high school?

When the views were counted for all persons who gave a figure for the ideal size of a high school in a "new city," the median figure turned out to be 500.

After this question was asked, a second question sought to elicit opinions on the general issue of whether high schools are too large or not large enough. Replies to the latter question showed that major groups making up the public agreed quite closely. Professional educators showed even a larger proportion holding the view that schools are too large.

Here is the question:

Do you think high schools today are getting too large or aren't they large enough?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Private School Parents	Professional Educators
	N = 1,627	928	620	124	306
	%	%	%	%	%
Getting too large	57	55	60	61	76
Not large enough	13	12	14	12	5
Just right	15	15	15	15	9
No opinion	15	18	11	12	9
	100	100	100	100	99*

*Where sum of percentages in columns does not total 100%, it is due to rounding of the figures.

Does Class Size Make A Difference?

While research findings point to the conclusion that, within certain limits, size of class makes little difference in student achievement, the general public was convinced in 1973 that smaller classes make "a great deal of difference" – a view shared by the professional educators who participated in the survey.

Every major group in the population held the belief that student achievement is related to class size. The question asked respondents was this:

In some school districts, the typical class has as many as 35 students; in other districts, only 20. In regard to the achievement or progress of students, do you think small classes make a great deal of difference, little difference, or no difference at all?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Private School Parents	Professional Educators
	N = 1,627	928	620	124	306
	%	%	%	%	%
A great deal of difference	79	75	83	87	85
Little difference	11	11	11	7	11
No difference	6	8	4	4	1
No opinion	4	6	2	2	2
	100	100	100	100	99*

*Due to rounding

Money Spent Related to Student Achievement

Gallup wrote:

> Just as some studies have shown that student achievement is not closely related to class size, so other studies have shown that the amount of money spent per child on his education – again within certain limits – bears little relationship to the child's progress in school. Since this research will almost certainly be a factor in future consideration of the financial needs of the public schools, it is important to discover how the public feels on this issue. Is quality of education closely correlated in the public's thinking with the amount a school district spends on the educational program per child?
>
> The answers bring to light a number of interesting differences between the general public and the educators – and reveal some inconsistency in the thinking of the average citizen on this matter.
>
> Professional educators say that the additional expenditure of money per child makes a "great difference." The public is evenly divided as to whether it makes a "great difference" or "little difference." If those who answer "no difference" are added to those who say "little difference," then a plurality of the public could be said to hold the view that additional expenditures by school districts make little or no difference. And yet these same respondents, in a related question, held that small classes were important to educational quality and to student achievement.
>
> What this means, it seems reasonable to assume, is that the public has not yet connected school expenditures per child to class size.

The question was stated as follows:

In some school districts, about $600 is spent per child per school year; some school districts spend more than $1,200. Do you think this additional expenditure of money makes a great deal of difference in the achievement or progress of students — or little difference?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Private School Parents	Professional Educators
	N = 1,627	928	620	124	306
	%	%	%	%	%
Great deal of difference	39	35	45	40	59
Little difference	38	39	36	39	25
No difference	10	11	8	10	6
Don't know	13	15	11	11	10
	100	100	100	100	100

State Financial Help to Schools

The suggestion that state governments increase taxes to pay more of the cost of local schools was voted down by the public by a 5:4 ratio. Professional educators, on the other hand, liked the idea, and cast a vote of more than 2 to 1 in favor of the proposal.

In the 1972 survey it was discovered that if a definite promise is made that local property taxes will be reduced, the public favors shifting more of the costs of operating the local schools to the state government. But without such a promise, the public opposes the plan.

The 1973 question was stated as follows:

It has been suggested that state government through increased taxes pay more of the cost of local school expenses. Would you favor or oppose an increase in state taxes for this purpose?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Private School Parents	Professional Educators
	N = 1,627	928	620	124	306
	%	%	%	%	%
Favor increase	40	38	44	41	65
Oppose increase	50	51	49	52	29
No opinion	10	11	7	7	6
	100	100	100	100	100

Sources of Information About the Schools

For the general public, the best source of information about the public schools in their communities in 1973 was the students themselves. Of the media, the best source of information was clearly the newspaper. The broadcast media – radio and television – were cited by only half as many.

Parents of students ranked second as a source of information, with teachers and the school board receiving the same number of mentions. What the survey findings seemed to indicate, therefore, was that attitudes about the quality of the local schools are based on information gained from many sources: the firsthand experience of students and teachers and from other parents, as well as from the media of communication, especially newspapers. The question:

What are the sources of information you use to judge the quality of schools in your community; that is, where do you get your information about the schools?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Private School Parents	Professional Educators
	N = 1,627	928	620	124	306
	%	%	%	%	%
Sources of Information					
Students	43	35	56	48	48
Newspapers	38	42	33	41	34
School board/ faculty	33	24	45	46	82
Parents of students	33	31	35	41	39
Other adults in community	23	24	22	20	27

	National Totals N = 1,627 %	No Children In School 928 %	Public School Parents 620 %	Private School Parents 124 %	Professional Educators 306 %
Radio and/or television	20	25	14	18	21
Other	12	12	13	15	20
PTA	3	—	7	5	1
Undesignated	4	6	2	2	1

(Totals exceed 100% because of multiple responses.)

Satisfaction with the Curriculum

Parents of school children – both those whose children were attending the public schools and those with children in private or parochial schools – said they were satisfied with their children's courses. When asked if their sons and daughters were "learning the things you believe [they] should," more than eight in 10 parents of children in the public schools said yes. Parents with children in private or independent schools expressed satisfaction at an even higher level.

Now, thinking about your oldest child in school (elementary, junior or senior high — not college): Do you think he (she) is learning the things you believe he (she) should be learning?

	National Totals N = 699 %	Public School Parents 620 %	Private School Parents 124 %
Yes	82	81	86
No	13	14	10
Don't know	5	5	4
	100	100	100

A second question asked if the child (the oldest one in school) was happy going to school, or whether he (or she) attended school simply because he (she) was required to do so. Only one parent in seven (14%) reported that the child in question went to school only because he must. These results need to be interpreted carefully. There are many degrees of liking; if a parent does not meet active resistance from the child, he is likely to assume that the child likes school.

But even taking the results at face value, the fact that one child in seven goes to school only because he is required to presents a major problem for the schools, Gallup thought, especially if children in this category are disruptive and the source of many discipline problems.

The question:

Is he (she) happy to go to school — that is, does he (she) go to school because he (she) wants to go or simply because he (she) is required to attend?

	National Totals N = 699 %	Public School Parents 620 %	Private School Parents 124 %
Wants to go	83	83	83
Goes because it is required	14	15	12
No opinion	3	2	5
	100	100	100

More Emphasis on Career Education

Gallup wrote:

> Few proposals receive such overwhelming approval today as the suggestion that schools give more emphasis to a study of trades, professions, and businesses to help students decide on their careers. Nine in 10 persons in all major groups sampled in this survey say they would like to have the schools give more emphasis to this part of the educational program.
>
> And most of those who vote for this greater emphasis say that this program should start with junior and senior high school, although many professional educators think it should start even earlier – in the elementary grades.

The question and the results:

Should public schools give more emphasis to a study of trades, professions, and businesses to help students decide on their careers?

	National Totals N = 1,627 %	No Children In School 928 %	Public School Parents 620 %	Private School Parents 124 %	Professional Educators 306 %
Yes, more emphasis	90	90	90	89	90
No	7	7	7	9	9
No opinion	3	3	3	2	1
	100	100	100	100	100

Alternative Schools

Gallup wrote:

> The surveys conducted in this five-year series have indicated that the public is usually sympathetic to new educational ideas, especially if these innovations represent a solution, in whole or in part, to a situation that needs correcting. The public's attitude can be summed up in a statement which comes frequently from respondents who are being asked to express their views on a new proposal: "Something must be done and nothing will be lost in giving this [plan or proposal] a try."
>
> The American public, it has been found in countless surveys, is pragmatic. If a plan works, that's fine; if it doesn't, get rid of it. And the people want to be the judge as to whether or not it works.
>
> Throughout the nation the press reports the difficulties schools are having with racial problems, school dropouts, discipline, and juvenile delinquency; the public is ready to try any solution that gives hope in solving these problems. One of the solutions is the alternative school, and the public seems ready to give it a try – and to judge later how well it works.
>
> The plans now being tried in various areas of the nation all vary in some manner; for this reason the question put to the public in describing the alternative school had to be stated in a very generalized form. It was stated as follows:

For students who are not interested in, or are bored with, the usual kind of education, it has been proposed that new kinds of local schools be established. They usually place more responsibility upon the student for what he learns and how he learns it. Some use the community as their laboratory and do not use the usual kind of classrooms. Do you think this is a good idea or a poor idea?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Private School Parents	Professional Educators
	N = 1,627	928	620	124	306
	%	%	%	%	%
Good idea	62	62	62	61	80
Poor idea	26	24	28	27	15
No opinion	12	14	10	12	5
	100	100	100	100	100

The table shows that professional educators, who were much more familiar with this idea than the general public, gave it an even higher vote of approval.

Parents' Right To Sue

In 1972, a lawsuit was filed against a U.S. school district by the parents of a student who had not been taught to read after a number of years in school.

The question arose as to whether the public believed that some kind of accountability should be imposed by legal action.

Fortunately, at least for those in charge of school financing, the public voted no on this issue by a substantial majority. Least in favor, as one might expect, were professional educators, who voted the suggestion down 5 to 1.

However, if even one parent in 100 held to this view, Gallup noted, future trouble was in store for the schools. Parents of children then in the public schools voted 28% in favor of this idea to 64% against. Only fairly recently have the courts established that schools cannot be held financially responsible for this kind of student failure.

The question and the findings:

Do you think parents should have the right to sue a school district if a student of normal intelligence and without physical disabilities reaches the sixth grade without being able to read?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Private School Parents	Professional Educators
	N = 1,627	928	620	124	306
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes, should have right	27	26	28	35	16
No	64	65	64	60	80
No opinion	9	9	8	5	4
	100	100	100	100	100

Attitudes Toward School Integration

Professional educators and parents with one or more children attending public school in 1973 were more inclined than other respondents to say that not enough was being done to integrate the schools throughout the nation.

Gallup wrote:

> While the overall vote shows slightly more holding the view that less should be done to integrate the schools, it is worth noting that attitudes toward integration are far less antagonistic than attitudes toward busing. The two – integration and busing – should not be confused. While busing is one way to bring about integration, polls have consistently shown an overwhelming majority of Americans opposed to achieving integration in this manner. Far too many persons considering this problem confuse ends with means.

The question asked:

Now, a question about how you feel about school integration. Do you believe more should be done — or less should be done — to integrate the schools throughout the nation?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Private School Parents	Professional Educators
	N = 1,627	928	620	124	306
	%	%	%	%	%
More should be done	30	29	31	26	41
Less should be done	38	40	36	36	29
No change from present	23	21	25	27	22
No opinion	9	10	8	11	8
	100	100	100	100	100

All respondents were asked if they felt differently about integration at the time than they had a few years earlier. A majority said their views hadn't changed; only one person in six said he had changed his views in recent years. When the views of persons in this group were examined, responses showed a slight change toward opposing integration.

Should Children Start School at Age 4?

Gallup wrote:

> The proposal to have children start school at age 4 arises with increasing frequency. Such a plan would, according to some authorities, make it possible to end schooling at the age of 17 for the typical student, thus permitting him to go to work or enter college a year earlier. But generally it is defended on other grounds.
>
> The proposal still does not meet with majority approval on the part of the public – or, for that matter, of professional educators.
>
> Moreover, there is no survey evidence to indicate a trend in the direction of support for such a plan. In the survey conducted in 1972, the vote in favor of this proposal was 32%, with 64% opposed and 4% with no opinion. Comparable figures for this year are: 30% in favor, 64% opposed, and 6% with no opinion.

The question and the findings:

Some educators have proposed that children start school one year earlier, that is, at age 4. Would you approve or disapprove of such a plan in this community?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Private School Parents	Professional Educators
	N = 1,627	928	620	124	306
	%	%	%	%	%
Favor	30	29	31	40	32
Oppose	64	64	64	55	63
No opinion	6	7	5	5	5
	100	100	100	100	100

In private schools, where the practice of starting children at age 4 was more common, the idea of introducing this plan in the public schools received a higher approval vote.

Why Families Move to the Suburbs

In recent decades, a century-old trend of moves from country to city has been reversed. Studies show that people not only want to move from large cities to suburban areas, but from medium-sized cities to smaller cities, and from smaller cities to the open countryside. Interestingly, education does not emerge in the 1973 poll as a prime motive for these moves, even among parents of school children. Professional educators, on the other hand, rate education high among motives.

The question and the responses:

As you know, many families living in the big cities of the nation are moving to the suburbs. Why, in your opinion, are they doing this?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Private School Parents	Professional Educators
	N = 1,627	928	620	124	306
	%	%	%	%	%
Reasons for Moving					
Big-city congestion	37	37	37	42	23
Fear of high crime level	24	24	23	23	28
Less pollution	17	16	18	18	14
To get away from minorities	14	14	14	15	29
Better educational opportunities	12	12	12	19	27
More open spaces	11	10	12	10	12
More desirable housing	11	9	13	19	12
Better environment for children	9	8	10	8	8
Cities are too noisy	7	8	6	5	5
High city taxes	6	6	4	9	5
Deterioration of the big cities	4	3	4	7	4
Lack of privacy	3	4	3	1	1
To create friendships	3	3	2	4	3
Improve one's standard of living	3	3	4	3	7
Lower rental costs	2	2	1	2	1
Lower cost of living in suburbs	2	3	2	1	3
Better employment opportunities	1	1	1	1	2
Children get in more trouble in cities	1	2	1	3	1
Drug problem	1	2	1	2	3
Status symbol	1	1	1	1	5
Miscellaneous	4	4	4	4	8
Don't know	6	6	5	4	—

The Importance of Education to Success

In 1972 Christopher Jencks published his influential book, *Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America.* In it he argued on the basis of extensive research that economic returns from staying in school have sometimes been exaggerated and that qualitative differences between schools do not seem to have any substantial effect on the subsequent earnings of students. Publication of the book prompted a question in the 1973 poll on the public's perception of the importance of schooling to success in life. The results show that the general public continued to regard education as crucial to success. Professional educators' responses, on the other hand, may have been influenced by the Jencks book.

The question and the results:

How important are schools to one's future success — extremely important, fairly important, not too important?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Private School Parents	Professional Educators
	N = 1,627	928	620	124	306
	%	%	%	%	%
Extremely important	76	71	81	84	69
Fairly important	19	22	16	13	28
Not too important	4	5	2	2	2
No opinion	1	2	—	1	1
	100	100	99*	100	100

*Due to rounding

When asked if their feelings about the importance of education had changed over the years, only one in five replied in the affirmative. However, in the case of professional educators the proportion was nearly three in 10 and among this group the majority felt that education had become *less important*. By contrast, few members of the general public said their views on the importance of education had changed. Of those whose views had changed, the great majority said it has been to *strengthen* their belief in education as a key to one's future success.

School Problems and Strengths

Once again in 1973, Gallup sought to measure the public's perception of local public school problems and strengths. The results, while not strikingly different from those of 1972, did show certain changes since 1969. Discipline still headed the list, but the percentage of respondents mentioning it as a problem declined from 26% to 22%, probably because of lessened turmoil occasioned by the Vietnam War. Rising in the list to second place was the complex of problems associated with integration/desegregation; in 1969 these problems were in fifth place. In 1969 lack of proper school facilities was second; in 1973 it had dropped to ninth.

The curriculum and the teachers headed the list of "particularly good" features of the local public schools, as they had in 1972. On the negative side was the number of people who volunteered no particularly good features: 33% in 1972; 28% in 1973.

The question and the responses:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the *public* schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals N = 1,627 %	No Children In School 928 %	Public School Parents 620 %	Private School Parents 124 %	Professional Educators 306 %
Lack of discipline	22	20	24	32	24
Integration/ segregation	18	22	14	15	19
Lack of proper financial support	16	14	20	10	35
Difficulty in getting "good" teachers	13	9	16	21	8
Use of drugs	10	11	8	12	4
Size of school/ classes	9	7	10	17	13
Poor curriculum	7	7	7	10	16
Lack of proper facilities	4	3	5	4	9
Parents' lack of interest	4	4	5	2	11
School board policies	4	4	5	2	5
Pupils' lack of interest	3	4	2	2	9
Communication problems	1	1	1	1	3
Transportation	—	—	—	—	—
There are no problems	4	3	6	2	2
Miscellaneous	4	3	5	3	7
Don't know	13	16	7	8	1

In your own opinion, in what ways are your local *public* schools particularly good?

	National Totals N = 1,627 %	No Children In School 928 %	Public School Parents 620 %	Private School Parents 124 %	Professional Educators 306 %
The curriculum	26	21	34	28	34
The teachers	23	17	32	23	38
School facilities	8	7	9	7	16
Extracurricular activities	7	7	6	5	7
Up-to-date teaching methods	5	5	6	4	15
No racial conflicts	4	4	3	1	5
Good administration	4	3	4	4	8
Small school/ classes	3	3	3	2	8
Good student-teacher relationships	3	3	3	3	3
Equal opportunity for all	3	4	1	4	5
Parental interest/ participation	2	2	3	2	7
Good discipline	2	2	3	3	3
Close to home	1	1	1	1	—
Good lunch program	1	1	2	2	1
Kids are kept off the street	1	1	1	—	1
Transportation system	—	—	—	—	—
Nothing is good	6	5	6	15	4
Miscellaneous	2	1	2	1	2
Don't know	28	37	15	22	4

Chapter 7
The Sixth Annual Poll, 1974

Events of the Year in Education

Inflation was ravaging schools and colleges. "Inflation is the number-one enemy of the country," said President Gerald Ford immediately after taking office. It was also the number-one enemy of public and private education. School authorities, coping with a relentless rise in prices, cut back the purchase of instructional materials, halted new construction, and reduced maintenance and repair of the educational plant. Among the first victims of inflation were programs for the handicapped, the arts, and extra-class activities. Hiring of new or additional personnel was at a standstill in many communities. School administrators placed sharp limitation on travel by school employees, wound down publication and public relations activities, and curtailed inservice workshops and institutes.

"The prospect is that education will be living with austerity for some time to come," said the Education Commission of the States. Everything that an educational institution bought was going up in price, from paper to welding rods, from heating oil to textbooks. To impress on students and teachers the rigors of inflation, some school boards instructed them to use both sides of a piece of paper and to use the old-fashioned slates when possible.

As a measure against inflation, President Ford set up summit conferences at which educators were asked to tell how to halt or reduce the cost spiral. All major educational associations sent representatives; and as President Ford sat and listened, educators took the occasion to press three lessons in educational economics: 1) schools and students are the victims of, not the contributors to, inflation; 2) education itself is an anti-inflationary process, because it trains people to become more productive and in consequence they pay higher taxes; and 3) the federal government should increase its budgets for career education and training for the handicapped, to firm up the economy by increasing productivity and reducing the welfare rolls.

It was coincidental, if not altogether propitious, that this was also the year Congress enacted the massive Education Amendments of 1974, which Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) declared "would go a long way toward resolving the major educational issues of our time." It was the first piece of school legislation to reach the newly installed President Ford, and he drew the biggest applause in his inaugural speech when he said he would sign it. He also said he would have to defer some of the programs that the amendments called for, because the total cost of the act would run over $25 billion within four years.

Not the dollars but the educational policy of Congress made the Education Amendments a measure of towering significance for many educators. In essence, the amendments broadened the pioneering Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965; in doing so, they affected virtually every aspect of education in the United States. In sum, Congress said that not only the states and local school districts but the federal government, too, is responsible for the education of America's children.

Under the act's umbrella, Congress authorized help for school districts coping with large numbers of "educationally deprived" children, the handicapped, and the bilingual. Money was promised for libraries; for guidance, health, and nutrition services; for instructional materials; and for a new effort to improve reading skills. Also promised was aid for educational research, inservice education, and teacher training. Nor did Congress overlook career and vocational education, Indian education, and new efforts to promote desegregation. Congress recognized the need to support such diverse efforts as dropout prevention and the use of museums as educational agencies. And this: "The President is authorized to call and conduct a White House Conference on Education in 1977 to stimulate a national assessment of the condition, needs, and goals of education."

New national leadership for teachers came to the fore during the year. The National Education Association elected Jim Harris as president. He was the first black man to head the organization (a black woman, Elizabeth Koontz, served as NEA president in 1968-69). Harris took office under a new NEA constitution that made him eligible to be re-elected after his one-year term expired and also gave his office new power and prestige. Among his first tasks was to decide whether he should lead the 1.4 million-member organization into a new national labor federation of public employees, outside the AFL-CIO. Merger talks between the NEA and the American Federation of Teachers (part of the AFL-CIO) had broken down.

The event that excited the press and many educators was the election of Albert Shanker as president of the American Federation of Teachers, a 425,000-member group in competition with the NEA. Shanker already wore the mantles of head of York City's United Federation of Teachers and New York State's United Teachers. He was also a vice president of the AFL-CIO. Shanker was born in New York City to Jewish immigrant parents and rose from teacher to teacher leader in New York. But Albert Shanker had national goals and said he would first seek to expand the AFT's membership and influence in the South. "Power is better than powerlessness," he said.

Internationally minded educators were disturbed as worldwide reports continued the litany throughout the year that

"UNESCO is in trouble." The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization was created shortly after World War II with the ringing statement, "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses for peace must be built." For two decades UNESCO remained a hope among educators that the cultural resources of the globe could be mustered to promote good will and peace among nations. For two decades, however, Third World nations, often joined by delegates from communist countries, sought to use UNESCO for their purposes: getting a large share of UNESCO resources to support their educational systems and using the international agency for propaganda.

A climax came in 1974, when a majority of Arab and Communist countries voted to withhold aid for Israel and to restrict its participation in a regional grouping of UNESCO nations. The backlash was immediate. The United States declared it would cut or eliminate financial support unless the resolution was repealed. From many of the world's educators, artists, scientists, writers, and musicians came protests and threats that they would no longer support UNESCO until the anti-Israeli resolutions were rescinded. Additionally, many began to sense that UNESCO had lost its reason for being and had become an agency for political warfare. Leaders in Congress and in many national educational associations deplored such trends and sought to return UNESCO to its main role: promoting good will and understanding among nations through culture and education.

Neither global issues nor large national problems prevented educators in 1974 from noting other developments of the year – large and small:

- Public school enrollments in the elementary grades continued their persistent downward trend.
- The hand calculator emerged as a new teaching device. Opposed by teachers, loved by students, the calculator was gaining slow recognition from leaders in mathematics as "a new language which should be brought into the instructional programs."
- A small number of schools began to train their students in the use of the metric system. Proponents of metrics prophesied that the system "will be in place in a decade." Opponents said, "Why change?"
- Among victims of inflation were national, regional, and state educational journals. "School journals are dying like flies," said one representative of the Educational Press Association. Some national educational magazines folded; others reduced their frequency of publication; and most state educational journals became newspapers or newsletters.

Poll Findings

As in 1970, the 1974 poll included a random sample of high school juniors and seniors. These 299 students answered many of the same questions asked of the adult sample, plus a few designed for the students only.

Questions were developed for this poll on several new topics. Among them: crime and gangs in the schools; alternative routes for students not interested in school work; sports participation for girls; training for citizenship; a comparison of the way good and poor students use their time outside school; and four possible constitutional amendments: 1) to permit prayers to be said in public schools, 2) to permit government financial aid to church-related schools, 3) to prohibit busing for racial integration of the schools, and 4) to equalize per-pupil expenditures for public education. And for high school juniors and seniors only, questions were asked about the purposes of school and the importance of a college education.

The Major Problems

No statistically significant change was found in the problems cited in 1973 and 1974, although there were a few changes in rank among the first 10 problems. Gallup considered it noteworthy that three of the top four problems (lack of discipline, integration/segregation, finance, and the use of drugs) related in various ways to student behavior – the kind that makes the front pages of the newspapers. In fact, slightly more than half of all mentions fell into this category. Students themselves named the same three problems: discipline, racial problems, and drug use.

The question and the findings:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the *public* schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Lack of discipline	23	21	25	29	32
Integration/ segregation problems	16	17	14	17	14
Lack of proper financial support	13	11	15	17	9
Use of drugs	13	13	12	15	13
Difficulty of getting "good" teachers	11	10	13	15	11
Size of school/ classes	6	4	9	8	8
Parents' lack of interest	6	6	6	4	2
School board policies	4	3	6	7	2
Poor curriculum	3	4	3	3	7
Lack of proper facilities	3	2	5	3	6
Pupils' lack of interest	2	2	2	*	14
Poor communication	*	*	1	1	4

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Miscellaneous	4	3	6	7	3
There are no problems	3	3	3	-	2
Don't know/ no answer	17	23	9	7	7

*Less than 1%

Crime and Gangs in the Schools

Planners for this poll included seven superintendents of city schools, among them Salt Lake City, Pasadena, Charlottesville (Va.), St. Louis, and Seattle. They expressed concern that there was a growing problem of school crime. Therefore two questions were framed to reveal public impressions on the subject. The first was as follows, with results as shown:

From what you have heard or read, is it your impression that stealing (money, clothes, lunches, books, etc.) goes on a great deal, some, or very little in the local *public* schools?

	Great Deal %	Some %	Very Little %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL	**33**	**34**	**15**	**18**
Sex				
Men	29	35	17	19
Women	36	34	12	18
Race				
White	32	36	14	18
Nonwhite	35	26	21	18
Education				
Elementary grades	31	25	20	24
High school	34	33	15	18
College	31	42	12	15
Region				
East	31	33	16	20
Midwest	31	39	14	16
South	30	32	16	22
West	40	31	13	16
Community Size				
500,000 and over	38	32	12	18
50,000 to 499,999	35	37	13	15
2,500 to 49,999	33	35	12	20
Under 2,500	23	34	22	21

Note differences by city size and region of the country. Residents of large cities and Western states were most concerned by the crime problem.

The second question and the results:

Are students gangs that disrupt the school or bother other students a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem in the local public schools?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Stealing					
Goes on a great deal	33	30	35	50	37
Some	34	31	39	29	47
Very little	15	13	18	5	15
Don't know/ no answer	18	26	8	16	1
Student Gangs					
Yes, a big problem	17	18	14	21	14
Somewhat of a problem	31	29	33	36	40
Not a problem	32	26	44	28	45
Don't know/ no answer	20	27	9	15	1

Again, residents of bigger cities and people in Western states tended to perceive the gang problem as more serious than did other groups. Also, nearly twice as many nonwhites as whites regarded gangs as "a big problem."

What to Do with the Uninterested Student

Gallup observed that in dealing with discipline problems, society must consider the student who is not interested in school and, consequently, is prone to trouble-making. "Many educators," he said, "suggest that such students be permitted to leave school rather than waste their time – and that of other students – by remaining in school." He went on to say that "the public has not accepted this point of view, chiefly because no agency is prepared to take responsibility for those released from school."

The question and the responses:

Some students have no interest in school work as now offered in junior and senior high school and they become a problem. Here are some ways that have been proposed for dealing with these students. Will you tell me in the case of each proposal whether or not you approve of it.

A. Permit these students to quit school.

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Approve	18	21	14	12	44
Disapprove	78	74	82	84	53
Don't know/ no answer	4	5	4	4	3
	100	100	100	100	100

B. Have businesses and industries provide on-the-job training as a substitute for regular school.

Approve	74	77	70	67	82
Disapprove	21	17	26	31	14
Don't know/ no answer	5	6	4	2	4
	100	100	100	100	100

C. Have special training courses which would prepare them for jobs.

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Approve	94	93	94	95	97
Disapprove	4	3	5	3	1
Don't know no answer	2	4	1	2	2
	100	100	100	100	100

D. Have a work-study program (½ day at school, ½ day on-the-job training).

Approve	86	85	89	86	90
Disapprove	9	9	9	12	10
Don't know no answer	5	6	2	2	*
	100	100	100	100	100

*Less than 1%.

E. Give school credit for volunteer work during the school day with an approved organization, such as a local hospital, day-care center, and the like.

Approve	77	77	77	74	83
Disapprove	17	15	20	24	15
Don't know no answer	6	8	3	2	2
	100	100	100	100	100

F. Have separate programs for students with out-of-the-ordinary interests and talents.

Approve	79	76	82	82	83
Disapprove	14	14	13	15	13
Don't know no answer	7	10	5	3	4
	100	100	100	100	100

High school juniors and seniors in the sample were asked this question, with results as shown:

What would make school more interesting and useful to you?

	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Wider variety of subjects	35
Better/more interested teachers	14
Extracurricular activities	10
Freedom to choose courses	8
Better preparation for non-college students	8
Better facilities	6
More free time	6
Better student/teacher relationships	3
Open classrooms	2
Better relationships between students	1
Miscellaneous	6
Nothing — it's all right now	8
Don't know/no answer	10
	117*

*Totals exceed 100% due to multiple answers by respondents.

Note that more than twice as many high school juniors and seniors as adults would permit a student to quit school. Moreover, 22% of those interviewed said they would prefer to take a full-time job to continuing in school. The question and findings:

If you could get a good full-time job, would you prefer taking the job or would you prefer to continue going to school?

	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Prefer full-time job	22
Prefer to continue school	78
	100

Gallup summed up these findings as follows:

> The burden . . . rests with the school to develop ways to deal with this problem. In the present survey, five different proposals for dealing with [uninterested] students were offered – in addition to one which would permit the student to quit school. Interestingly, the public approves of each of the five proposals by a heavy majority.
>
> Of the five proposals offered, the one receiving the highest favorable vote calls for special courses which would train students for jobs.
>
> Another plan that both students and their elders favor offers a middle ground. This plan would have "business and industries" provide on-the-job training as a substitute for regular school. Presumably, under this plan the school would keep a close check on the student.
>
> A plan that would offer a work-study program with one-half day spent in school and the other half at training on the job produces a favorable response from 86% of the general public, 90% of high school juniors and seniors.
>
> Giving school credit for volunteer work done during the school day – with an approved organization, such as a local hospital, day-care center, and the like – appeals to a large majority, as do special school programs designed especially for students with out-of-the-ordinary interests and talents.
>
> The conclusion that seems warranted, at least from the public's viewpoint, is that the schools of the nation have a green light to devise programs that will permit high school students to spend a great deal of their time outside the school with on-the-job training or doing the kind of volunteer work that will lead to a job. But the schools must be responsible for executing the plan and seeing to it that students don't use the plan as a way of escaping from work – either in school or on the job.

Automatic Promotion

The policy of automatic promotion found little support throughout the nation. A slightly higher percentage of high school juniors and seniors than adults supported this idea, but even among this group only 10% favored automatic promotion as opposed to 87% who favored a plan that would require a student to repeat courses that he failed but permit him to go on to the next year in the subjects that he passed.

The question and findings:

Some students are not able to keep up with their classmates and therefore fail their work. Which of these two ways of dealing with this problem do you prefer?

	National Totals %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Automatic promotion	7	10
Repeat failed courses	90	87
No opinion	3	3
	100	100

How to Handle the Recalcitrant Student

Gallup's analysis:

While the noninterested student poses a special problem, what to do with the recalcitrant student presents a more vexing discipline issue. Complicating matters, the courts and school boards have set guidelines in many communities, with the result that teachers and administrators are at a loss to know how to deal with a student who consistently refuses to obey orders. Obviously, disciplinary action must take account of community attitudes.

With this fact in mind, an effort was made in the present study to gain some insight into the public's views. The question was posed: "What should be done with a high school student who refuses to obey his teachers?"

Oddly enough, parents of school children and high school juniors and seniors take a more punitive attitude than do persons who have no children in school. Slightly more than half (57%) of the parents of school children interviewed said they would expel the student, see that he spent extra time in school, or recommended that he be paddled. Those who opted for a type of rehabilitation ("counsel," "work-study program," "change of teachers or courses," "transfer to another school," "discussions with teachers and principals," "involvement of parents," and similar remedial measures) constitute 59%.

The question and the findings:

What should be done with a high school student who refuses to obey his teachers?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Punitive Action					
Suspend/ expel	31	30	32	33	41
Punish	11	11	11	6	4
Detention time	4	3	6	5	8
Paddle	7	7	8	3	3
Rehabilitation					
Counsel	13	13	14	15	17
Provide work/ study program	1	1	1	2	2
Discussions with principals, teachers, juvenile authorities	8	8	7	9	18
Involve parents	22	19	26	30	13
Provide special curriculum/ teachers	10	9	11	12	3
Miscellaneous	3	3	2	*	6
Don't know/ no answer	10	12	7	11	7

*Less than 1%

Participation in Sports by Girls

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 attempted to rectify inequalities in sports programs offered boys and girls in the public schools. As the following questions and the responses show, the public may have been well ahead of lawmakers on such issues.

Should girls be permitted to participate in noncontact sports — track, tennis, golf, baseball and the like — on the same teams with boys?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Yes	59	58	59	66	76
No	35	34	37	30	22
Don't know/ no answer	6	8	4	4	2
	100	100	100	100	100

Should girls have equal financial support for their athletic activities as boys?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Yes	88	87	88	96	89
No	7	7	8	4	9
Don't know/ no answer	5	6	4	-	2
	100	100	100	100	100

Educational Innovation

In this 1974 poll, a question about educational innovation first used in 1970 was repeated, with very similar results. In 1970, 20% of the respondents said they thought the local schools were "not interested enough" in trying new methods; in the 1974 survey, 24% gave that response. A breakdown by groups shows some interesting differences. Parents with children in the public schools were more inclined to say the schools are too ready to try new ideas. High school juniors and seniors (not interviewed in 1970) were far more likely than other groups to say the schools were not interested in trying new ideas.

The question and the results:

Do you feel that the local *public* schools are not interested enough in trying new ways and methods or are they too ready to try new ideas?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Not interested enough	24	25	21	26	48
Too ready to try new ideas	20	17	26	23	13
Just about right	32	25	42	27	34
Don't know/ no answer	24	33	11	24	5
	100	100	100	100	100

Teacher Tenure

With the supply of teachers greater than the demand in many regions and specialties in 1974, pressures on local schools to change policies regarding tenure had increased. This survey showed that the general public generally opposed the principle of tenure. The same tenure question was included in the 1972 survey. An increase of three percentage points in the number favoring tenure was found in the 1974 study, with a decline of five percentage points in those opposed.

The question and the findings:

Most public school teachers have tenure; that is, after a two- or three-year trial period they receive what amounts to a lifetime contract. Do you approve or disapprove of this policy?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Approve	31	32	31	34
Disapprove	56	52	61	59
Don't know/ no answer	13	16	8	7
	100	100	100	100

Information About the Schools

Gallup observed:

> Parents of children in the public schools and in parochial/private schools would like to have more information about the schools in the community. Current journalistic practice in most parts of the nation is to give preference to "hard" news, that is, to events or happenings that usually relate to vandalism, racial troubles, discipline problems, protests, teacher strikes, and similar news, which most laymen would describe as "bad" news.
>
> In some cities reporters make a serious effort to find good news. The interest of parents, however, is in information which probably fits neither category, but which enables them to make better judgments about the schools and the education of their children. Newsletters from the school *may* be the only way to supply this need.

To discover the interest of different groups in the schools, the 1974 survey included this question with results as shown:

Would you like to know more about the schools in this community?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	54	45	64	61
No	38	44	31	34
Don't know/ no answer	8	11	5	5
	100	100	100	100

When those who answered yes were asked, "What kind of information would be of particular interest to you?" the responses, in order of frequency, were:

1. The curriculum
2. Qualifications of teachers
3. Current methods of teaching
4. How the schools are administered
5. The problem of discipline
6. The financial status of the schools
7. Extracurricular activities
8. Academic ratings of the schools
9. Student attitudes toward the schools
10. More information about "my child"
11. Handling of students with special problems
12. Information about the grading system
13. Problems of integration
14. How parents can become involved in school activities

Constitutional Amendments Affecting the Schools

Four amendments to the U.S. Constitution suggested in 1974 dealt with these matters: busing to achieve racial integration, equalization of funds to narrow the gap between schools in poor and well-to-do communities, government financial aid to parochial schools, and an amendment that would permit prayers to be said in the public schools.

If these amendments had been made the subject of nationwide referenda, these majorities would likely have been found:

1. An amendment to permit prayers: in favor 77%, opposed 17%, no opinion 6%.
2. An amendment to permit government financial aid to parochial schools: in favor 52%, opposed 35%, no opinion 13%.
3. An amendment to equalize amounts spent within a state on school children: in favor 66%, opposed 22%, no opinion 12%.
4. An amendment to forbid busing to achieve racial integration: in favor of busing 18%, opposed 72%, no opinion 10%.

Because of some interesting demographic differences in responses to these questions, detailed breakdowns follow:

These proposals are being suggested to amend the U.S. Constitution. As I read each one, will you tell me if you favor or oppose it?

A. An amendment to the Constitution that would permit prayers to be said in the public schools.

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL	**77**	**17**	**6**
Sex			
Men	75	20	5
Women	80	15	5
Race			
White	77	18	5
Nonwhite	78	16	6
Education			
Elementary grades	84	9	7
High school	81	14	5
College	67	28	5
Age			
18 to 29 years	69	25	6
30 to 49 years	79	16	5
50 years and over	80	13	7
Religion			
Protestant	82	13	5
Roman Catholic	79	15	6
Jewish	34	61	5
All others	50	41	9
Region			
East	75	19	6
Midwest	77	17	6
South	86	10	4
West	68	26	6
Political affiliation			
Republican	81	13	6
Democrat	77	17	6
Independent	74	21	5

B. An amendment to the Constitution that would permit government financial aid to parochial schools.

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL	**52**	**35**	**13**
Sex			
Men	50	39	11
Women	55	31	14
Race			
White	53	35	12
Nonwhite	50	29	21
Education			
Elementary grades	51	28	21
High school	56	31	13
College	48	44	8
Age			
18 to 29 years	56	33	11
30 to 49 years	54	35	11
50 years and over	50	35	15
Religion			
Protestant	44	41	15
Roman Catholic	76	15	9
Jewish	27	66	7
All others	39	48	13
Region			
East	59	30	11
Midwest	59	32	9
South	45	36	19
West	46	43	11
Political affiliation			
Republican	49	39	12
Democrat	54	32	14
Independent	53	35	12

C. At present some public school districts spend less than others per child in school. Would you favor or oppose a constitutional amendment to reduce these differences?

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL	**66**	**22**	**12**
Sex			
Men	66	24	10
Women	67	19	14
Race			
White	65	23	12
Nonwhite	75	13	12
Education			
Elementary grades	69	12	19
High school	66	21	13
College	65	28	7
Age			
18 to 29 years	73	17	10
30 to 49 years	64	27	9
50 years and over	65	19	16
Religion			
Protestant	65	22	13
Roman Catholic	67	22	11
Jewish	84	9	7
All others	71	18	11
Region			
East	64	20	16
Midwest	65	24	11
South	67	22	11
West	71	21	8
Political affiliation			
Republican	56	29	15
Democrat	71	18	11
Independent	67	22	11

D. Do you favor busing of school children for the purpose of racial integration or should busing for this purpose be prohibited through a constitutional amendment?

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL	**18**	**72**	**10**
Sex			
Men	19	73	8
Women	18	71	11
Race			
White	15	75	10
Nonwhite	40	47	13
Education			
Elementary grades	21	70	9
High school	15	75	10
College	22	67	11
Age			
18 to 29 years	22	67	11
30 to 49 years	16	74	10
50 years and over	18	72	10

	Favor	Oppose	Don't Know/ No Answer
Religion	%	%	%
Protestant	16	75	9
Roman Catholic	19	70	11
Jewish	21	68	11
All others	30	55	15
Region			
East	17	70	13
Midwest	18	74	8
South	20	73	7
West	17	70	13
Political affiliation			
Republican	13	78	9
Democrat	22	69	9
Independent	16	72	12

A Letter Grade for School Quality

For the first time in 1974, the poll asked respondents to use the familiar letter-grading system to rate their local public schools. This question has been used ever since, not only to reveal perceptions about local schools but about the schools of the nation and the schools one's children attend. Gallup introduced the question by observing that the public schools represent one of the two or three American institutions that have held the respect and confidence of a majority of citizens in a period of widespread cynicism and disillusionment. He was referring to the Watergate syndrome and reaction to the Vietnam War.

Gallup noted that wide variations were found in responses from different segments of the sample, but observed that educators could take comfort from the fact that the people who probably know their local schools best – the parents of children in the public schools – give them the highest rating.

The question and the results:

Students are often given the grades A,B,C,D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A,B,C,D, or FAIL?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents	High School Juniors & Seniors
	%	%	%	%	%
A rating	18	16	22	12	9
B rating	30	22	42	28	41
C rating	21	19	24	22	35
D rating	6	7	4	9	10
Fail	5	4	3	15	2
Don't know/ no answer	20	32	5	14	3
	100	100	100	100	100

A different breakdown of findings:

	A	B	C	D	FAIL	Don't Know/ No Answer
	%	%	%	%	%	%
NATIONAL	**18**	**30**	**21**	**6**	**5**	**20**
Sex						
Men	18	30	21	7	5	19
Women	18	30	20	6	4	22
Race						
White	18	30	21	6	4	21
Nonwhite	18	31	17	5	10	19
Education						
Elementary grades	25	24	13	5	4	29
High school	19	28	22	6	4	21
College	13	38	22	7	4	16
Age						
18 to 24 years	11	24	34	10	4	17
25 to 29 years	18	29	20	9	4	20
30 to 49 years	18	37	21	5	5	14
50 years and over	21	24	17	5	4	29
Community size						
1 million and over	13	27	20	7	8	25
500,000 to 999,999	20	21	22	9	5	23
50,000 to 499,999	16	33	23	6	4	18
2,500 to 49,999	25	34	16	2	4	19
Under 2,500	18	31	21	6	3	21

The Public's Perceptions of a "Good" School

Educators often ask how the public reaches a judgment that a school is "good." To shed light on the reasons, this question was asked:

If you could send a child of yours to any school in this area, to what school would you send him?

Those who responded (68% of the total) were then asked to tell exactly why they selected this school. Their answers, summarized, can be stated as follows:

The good school has teachers who are interested in their work and in their students, teachers who make their classes interesting, enough variety in the curriculum to interest students who are not college-bound, good discipline and respect for authority, good student/teacher relationships, and good student-to-student relationships.

Many other things were mentioned: modern equipment, small classes, good administration, up-to-date teaching methods, religious training, etc.

Training for Citizenship

The failure of many young people to register and to vote in the presidential election of 1972 led some critics to question the wisdom of letting young persons vote at the age of 18, permitted by the 26th Amendment to the Constitution, passed in 1971. Since the schools must bear much of the responsibility for preparing young people for citizenship, an important question arose: Do high school juniors and seniors know enough about the Constitution, government, and the political process to enable them to cast a reasonably intelligent vote?

To obtain the views of the public – and of high school juniors and seniors themselves – this question was included in the survey:

Young people who reach the age of 18 now have the right to vote. The question arises as to whether high school courses give students enough information about the Constitution, about government and the political process, to enable them to vote intelligently. What is your impression — how good a job do the schools perform in this respect: good, fair, or poor?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Good	33	28	39	38	47
Fair	33	32	35	36	34
Poor	16	18	13	15	16
Don't know/ no answer	18	22	13	11	3
	100	100	100	100	100

Time Spent on Four Activities by Better Versus Poorer Students

Gallup observed:

Parents who are concerned about their children's progress in school can gain some guidance from facts gathered in the survey indicating how students with higher grades spend their out-of-school hours in contrast to students with lower grades.

The time spent on four activities was recorded for a typical day: reading not connected with school work, homework, listening to radio, and viewing television. The results, when analyzed, show that students at the top of their class, and students with above-average grades, spend markedly more time reading for pleasure than do the poorer students.

Students at the top of their class actually devote nearly twice as much time to reading not connected with their school work as do the students in the lower half of their classes. Also, they spend more time on homework and far less time watching television.

This finding confirms the results reported in other studies made in the United States and Great Britain. Students who do less well in their school work tend to spend more time on television and less on reading than do the students at the top of their classes.

Persons who grew up in an earlier generation may be shocked by the small amount of time students of today spend on reading. And, judging from the information obtained from high school juniors and seniors, the years spent in school have little apparent effect in encouraging greater time spent in reading.

High school juniors and seniors in the upper half of their classes spent only 17 minutes, the median, on a given day reading for pleasure. Those in the lower half spent only five minutes. A total of 30% of those in the upper half read nothing not required; more than half (53%) of those in the lower half read nothing.

No significant differences were found in respect to radio listening. About the same percentage of all three groups listened, and the amount of time spent averaged about the same for those at the top as for those at the bottom.

The parents who want to see their children improve their grades might follow this time schedule for their out-of-school activities:

Reading for pleasure – 30 minutes to one hour
Doing homework – one hour
Listening to radio – 30 minutes to one hour
Viewing television – not more than one and one-half hours

The question and the findings:

Is this child at the top of his/her class, above average, average, or below average in his/her grades? (Asked of parents, who responded for their oldest child in school)

Where do you stand academically in your class — near the top, above average, average, or below average? (Asked of high school juniors and seniors)

	Parents of School Children %	High School Juniors & Seniors %
Near top	20	23
Above average	34	30
Average	40	45
Below average	4	2
Don't know/no answer	2	-
	100	100

Thinking now about this child, how much time does this child spend in these various ways on a typical school day in the hours when he/she is not in school?

Parents of public school children reported:

	None %	Minutes Spent (Median)	Minutes Spent (Mean)
Amount of Time Spent Reading Not Connected With Homework			
Top of class	11	35	53
Above average	26	29	44
Lower half	34	20	28
Doing homework			
Top of class	15	57	68
Above average	22	40	57
Lower half	27	30	39
Looking at television			
Top of class	10	97	97
Above average	8	94	94
Lower half	9	127	145
Listening to radio			
Top of class	39	27	59
Above average	43	28	56
Lower half	40	29	53

Thinking only of the last school day, which you mentioned above, how much time did you spend?

High school juniors and seniors reported:

	None %	Minutes Spent (Median)	Minutes Spent (Mean)
Amount of Time Spent Reading Not Connected With Homework			
Top of class	30	17	29
Above average	53	5	24
Doing homework			
Top of class	32	30	52
Above average	43	29	44
Looking at television			
Top of class	31	50	80
Above average	23	100	102
Listening to radio			
Top of class	23	41	70
Above average	22	50	85

The Most Important Things Juniors and Seniors Say They Are Getting Out of School

When high school juniors and seniors were asked this question,

Who do you feel are the most important things *you* are getting out of school?

the answers that come up most frequently were "making friends," and "learning to get along with people." These reasons were cited even more often than "gaining a general education" or "preparing for a job after high school." Fourth in frequency of mentions was "preparation for college."

Very few students mentioned goals usually cited by educators: "personal development," "acquiring a sense of values," "widening one's outlook," "becoming more mature." Some students said they had developed a greater sense of responsibility, more self-reliance, and that they had learned to cope better with people and problems; but very few juniors and seniors said that the most important thing they were getting out of school was development of their individual capabilities.

The Goals of Education as Seen by High School Juniors and Seniors

When high school juniors and seniors were asked, "What are the overall educational goals of the school you attend?" their answers fell chiefly into three categories:

1. To prepare students for college, 43%.
2. To prepare students for jobs, 25%.
3. To graduate students and get them out of school, 10%.

Few cited, as a goal of education, the development of the individual student.

Importance of College Education

The following question, asked of the high school juniors and seniors, provided interesting views when considered in the context of the many discussions of the day on the "relevance of college education."

The question and findings:

How important is a college education today: extremely important, fairly important, not too important, or not important at all?

	High School Juniors & Seniors
	%
Extremely	36
Fairly	51
Not too	10
Not at all	2
Don't know/no answer	1
	100

Chapter 8
The Seventh Annual Poll, 1975

Events of the Year in Education

Achievement scores of students, both college- and non-college-bound, declined sharply during the year and set off widespread concern and discussion among educators and the public.

The bad news about what American students knew and did not know came first from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which reported that "the declines in scores took place among all levels of students, from 9-year-olds through 17-year-olds, and reflected a disturbing lack of knowledge in science and math." Then came a report from the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) that high school graduates had a shaky grip on math and verbal skills. The CEEB's scholastic aptitude test results showed that high school seniors in 1975 scored 10 points lower than did the seniors a year before; math scores were eight points lower. It was the sharpest single drop in scores in any one year since 1962, when a gradual decline in student achievement had begun.

The mass media took up the reports with zest. Newspaper articles, columns, and editorials, along with radio and television made much of the NAEP's revelations that elementary school children could not answer correctly "a typical science question," and that 17-year-olds could not correctly calculate a taxi fare or balance a checkbook. "We're caught with our scores down," said one Colorado educator, "and we don't know why or what to do."

Critics of America's public schools used the facts to bewail "the schools' unwillingness or inability to teach students to read, write, and figure." They accused the schools of "disregard for the three R's," "lack of classroom discipline," and "lowering of educational standards." Educators responded by setting up commissions and panels to find reasons for the test-score declines.

Reports about low student achievement coincided with equally disturbing news about how students behaved in school. In essence the news was that crime had come to the schools to stay. Murder, rape, assaults, extortion, robbery, and vandalism were rampant in classrooms, school halls, and grounds. A U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency released what it called a report card on the nation's schools, with an "A" for violence and vandalism. Summing up 1971-75 investigations in 750 school districts, the subcommittee revealed 70,000 assaults on teachers each year and hundreds of thousands of attacks on students, including 100 murders.

The subcommittee report printed explicit facts. In Los Angeles, 60 gun episodes took place in the first four months of 1975, including one student killing. In San Francisco, gang warfare and organized mayhem terrorized students and teachers. In Birmingham, Alabama, school officials carried guns for their own protection. In St. Louis, repairs for vandalized schools cost $250,000 in 12 months. In Broward County, Florida, the number of arson cases doubled from 1974 to 1975.

The subcommittee estimated the cost of school vandalism at $500,000 a year. The list of crimes committed by students on school property included rapes and attempted rapes, robberies, and "unrestricted use of knives, clubs, pistols and sawed-off shotguns." In some high schools students provided the services of prostitutes. Drugs were easy to buy.

No part of the country was immune, the subcommittee reported, although serious violence and crime occurred more often in large urban high schools.

To cope with school crime, principals enforced stringent discipline codes, sought the help of parents, and looked to guidance and counseling staffs for ways to mitigate violent and aberrant student behavior. But the most common step was to hire more school guards ("security personnel"). The National Association of School Security Directors became a visible and vocal group on the education scene in 1975.

Suspension and expulsion were among the means school authorities used in coping with student violence and misbehavior. And 1975 was the year when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled, in two separate cases, that students facing suspension have protection under the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The two cases, *Goss* v. *Lopez* and *Wood* v. *Strickland*, sharply limited the power of school authorities to impose penalties without due process procedures.

The first case involved Dwight Lopez, one of nine students in Columbus, Ohio, who had been suspended without a hearing from high school for up to 10 days. The students were accused of disturbances in lunchrooms, auditoriums, and classrooms. In filing an action against the Columbus Board of Education, the students and their parents complained that the suspensions deprived them the right of an education without a hearing. When the case finally reached the U.S. Supreme Court, the decision was five to four in favor of the students. Said the majority opinion: "The authority of the state [Ohio] to enforce standards of conduct in its schools must be exercised with constitutional safeguards. . . . Total exclusion from the educational process (even for 10 days) is a serious event in the life of the suspended child. . . . Students facing such suspension . . . must be given oral or written notice of the charges . . . and an opportunity to present their side of the story."

The second case came to the high court from Mena, Arkansas. Three tenth-grade girls were accused of spiking a

bowl of punch for a school party. The principal suspended them for a maximum of two weeks and recommended that the board suspend them for the remainder of the school term. The students and their parents took the case to the courts, claiming the expulsion was without due process and seeking damages against the school board and its officials.

The U.S. Supreme Court agreed unanimously with the students. The essence of its opinion was this: School officials are not immune from damages if they knew or should have known that their actions would violate the constitutional rights of students. The amount of the damages, however, would have to be decided in another trial.

While many school officials complained that the two rulings would erode their authority, state education agencies and local school boards began revising their policies to bring them in line with the Supreme Court's decisions.

When not preoccupied by education's problems of the year, parents and educators took notice of what was called "the most hopeful development in education in a decade" – the alternative school.

The 1974 most authoritative estimates had placed the number of alternative schools at 600. By the end of 1975, the count stood at 1,400. Proponents predicted that by the middle of 1976 the number would exceed 5,000.

The striking growth of this new educational venture took place within the public school system. Alternative public schools provided parents, teachers, and students with options and choices for learning beyond, or in addition to, those offered by conventional public schools. Alternative schools took any one of a number of directions. Some emphasized the basics and discipline; others offered a rich choice of the arts; still others stressed independent study. They went under such names as open schools, schools without walls, learning centers, continuation schools, multicultural schools, and schools within schools. An alternative school in Hartford, Connecticut, related most of its curriculum to community problems. A school in Berkley, California, was largely controlled by student decisions on curriculum.

A 1975 report by a consortium of alternative schools said: "The fast-spreading alternative schools suggest that the most far-reaching experimentation and innovation ever to occur in public education is now under way. . . . There has never been anything like it."

Poll Findings

Among a number of new questions asked in the 1975 poll were two of special historical interest. For the first time, people were asked to choose among areas in which new federal funds might be expended and to speculate on causes of the SAT score decline, which was later to become the subject of a national blue-ribbon panel investigation. Answers to these questions will be presented first.

Federal Aid for the Public Schools

Gallup said:

> Resistance to higher property taxes and to other state and local taxes has led many educators to the belief that the educational system must rely to a greater extent in the future on the federal government for needed funds.
>
> Since the federal government itself is besieged for increased appropriations by all departments and agencies of government, and for a host of social programs, the question arises as to where the public schools stand vis-à-vis these other claimants for federal revenue.
>
> The present contribution of the federal government to typical school districts is minor, and half of those questioned in the present survey were unaware that the federal government provides money for their local schools. Even in the case of those who were aware that the federal government does provide some money, there is much confusion as to the size of the federal contribution.
>
> The need for greater financial assistance to the schools is found throughout the nation. When the public is asked to name the greatest problems which their local public schools face, the need for greater financing is typically cited among the first three needs or problems of the local schools.
>
> To discover the strength of the public school's case relative to 10 other programs that call for sizable amounts from the federal treasury, respondents were asked to state which one of these programs should be given first consideration when additional federal money becomes available. Survey participants were asked also for their second and third choices.

The question and the findings:

If and when more federal money from Washington is available, which *one* of the areas on this card do you think should be given first consideration when these funds are distributed? And which *one* of these areas do you think should be given *second* consideration? And which *one* of these areas do you think should be given *third* consideration?

	NATIONAL TOTALS			
	First Choice %	Second Choice %	Third Choice %	Combined Choice %
Health care	18	19	16	53
Public school education	16	15	17	48
Law enforcement	11	14	16	41
Welfare and aid to poor	14	11	7	32
Public housing	10	9	7	26
Pollution, conservation	8	8	8	24
Mass transit (trains, buses)	6	7	6	19
Military defense	6	5	5	16
Agricultural aid	4	4	7	15
Highway improvement	4	4	5	13
Foreign aid	1	1	1	3
No opinion	2	3	5	10

Gallup said:

> If future Congresses were to follow these priorities, then the public schools should look forward to substantial increases

in federal financing.* By the same token, military defense, which presently takes almost a third of the federal budget, would get proportionately less.

While the public schools stand near the top of the list, it should be pointed out that no single program of the 11 listed obtains more than 18% of the first choices and only one, health care, gets more than half of all choices – first, second, and third.

Public school education receives 16% of the first choices and a total of 48% of the three choices combined.

The Decline in SAT Scores

Gallup said:

> Educators have cited many reasons for declining national test scores reported in recent years, particularly in the case of the SAT test given to high school seniors who are interested in going on to college.
>
> Do parents and the general public hold the same opinions as educators? To find out, an "open" question dealing with this problems was included in the survey.
>
> Analysis of the public's verbatim responses shows that the reason offered most often for declining test scores is lack of student interest and motivation. The public offers one explanation seldom stressed by professional educators. In earlier years, competition to find places in college proved to be a powerful incentive to work hard and to get good grades. Now students know that, even if they do poorly in school, they can still find some college that will admit them. Moreover, a college education is not deemed as important as it once was in finding a job. Many respondents point out that college graduates are having a hard time getting jobs. The net effect of this has been to remove some of the drive to work hard and to excel.
>
> Nearly the same percentage of respondents cite the lack of discipline in the home and in the school. Some typical comments are: "Parents no longer insist that their children apply themselves and get their work done." "They let their children run wild in the streets." "Teachers are too lenient and don't require adequate performance." "Teachers spend too much time trying to keep order in class."
>
> Next in frequency of mention are those responses which cite the curriculum as being too easy. Examples of these are: "Students have been allowed to learn what they want to learn and not what they need to learn." "Too many soft subjects." "Not enough attention to basic subjects."
>
> Approximately one response in five blames the teachers and their lack of interest. Respondents say, "Teachers do not require students to learn anymore." "Teachers at each level pass the buck back to the previous level and say 'You didn't do your work well'." "All teachers are interested in is more money."
>
> Many other causes for the declining scores of students were offered, among them the idea that television occupies too much of young peoples' time and that outside activities draw too much of their interest. Respondents also cited overcrowding, drugs, and such other reasons as "the complete breakdown of the public school system" and "the disintegration of the family."

The question and the responses:

The national tests that have been given to students throughout the nation indicate that students today do not have as high scores as they had a few years ago in many subject areas. What do you think is the reason for this?

Students' lack of interest/motivation	29%
Lack of discipline in the home and school	28%
Poor curriculum (too easy, not enough emphasis on basics)	22%
Inadequate teachers, uninterested teachers	21%
Too many outside interests, including TV	8%
Miscellaneous, including integration, overcrowding, drugs, etc.	13%
No opinion	13%

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

School Problems and Ratings

Summaries of responses to the two questions that were perennials of the Gallup education poll – major problems and school ratings – follow:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the *public* schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Lack of discipline	23	23	23	21
Integration/segregation/busing	15	17	11	16
Lack of proper financial support	14	13	15	13
Difficulty of getting "good" teachers	11	11	12	12
Size of school/ classes	10	7	13	5
Use of drugs	9	10	9	10
Poor curriculum	5	4	7	5
Crime/vandalism/ stealing	4	5	4	-
Lack of proper facilities	3	2	3	4
Pupils' lack of interest	3	4	2	2
Parents' lack of interest	2	2	3	3
School board policies	1	1	1	2
There are no problems	5	4	6	5
Miscellaneous	12	11	13	24
Don't know/ no answer	10	13	6	5

(Totals add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

*Federal expenditures for education did indeed increase over the next five years until, by 1980, the federal share of the nation's total expenditures for public education reached 9%. After that, however, they plunged until, in 1988, the federal share was barely 6%.

The rating question:

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
A rating	13	11	17	5
B rating	30	26	36	25
C rating	28	27	29	24
D rating	9	9	8	16
FAIL	7	7	7	18
Don't know/ no answer	13	20	3	12

The 1975 poll registered a significant drop in the number of persons giving the schools a grade of A. The change was from 18% in 1974 to 13% in 1975.

The lowest ratings of the public schools come, understandably, from parents whose children are now attending independent/parochial schools. In this group, only 5% give the public schools an A rating; 34% give them a rating of either D or FAIL.

Gallup speculated that the public's rating of the schools was influenced by a general loss of confidence in and respect for all American institutions. He said:

> Education and the church, it should be pointed out, still have much higher confidence ratings than Congress, the Supreme Court, organized labor, or big business. A Gallup Poll released in July 1975, shows that the public gives a high confidence rating of 67% to the schools as opposed to a 40% confidence rating for Congress, a 38% confidence rating for organized labor, and a 34% rating for big business.
>
> Apart from this, it should be pointed out, the media have given wide publicity this year to the increasing crime and vandalism in the schools throughout the nation and to the declining test scores as reported by national college entrance examinations.

When Gallup analyzed the results by socioeconomic groups, a fact important to the education profession came to light. The two bellwether groups – the college educated and the young adults – gave the public schools the lowest ratings. Clearly, Gallup observed, this should be regarded as a warning signal.

In 1974, 40% of the 18-29 age group gave the public schools an A or B rating. In 1975 only 32% of this age group gave the schools an A or B rating. In 1974, 51% of those who had attended college gave the schools an A or B rating. In 1975 this proportion dropped to 43%. In the 1975 survey, 41% of those who attended college gave the schools a C or D rating, compared to 29% who gave the schools a C or D in 1974.

Abuse of Drugs and Alcohol

In 1975, 59% of parents with children in the public schools perceived the abuse of drugs by young people locally to be a serious problem. This was true in communities of all sizes in all parts of the nation, whereas it had been regarded as serious only in large cities five years earlier. Alcohol abuse was newly perceived as a serious problem also in small as well as large communities.

These two questions were asked.

Is the use of drugs by young people a serious problem in this community? What about alcoholic drinks?

	Drugs a Serious Local Youth Problem		
	Yes %	No %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**58**	**27**	**15**
Sex			
Men	56	29	15
Women	60	25	15
Race			
White	57	28	15
Nonwhite	64	21	15
Age			
18 to 29 years	56	32	12
30 to 49 years	61	27	12
50 years and over	57	22	21
Education			
Elementary grades	62	21	17
High school	59	27	14
College	53	31	16
Community size			
1 million and over	54	26	20
500,000 to 999,999	57	25	18
50,000 to 499,999	62	23	15
2,500 to 49,999	69	21	10
Under 2,500	51	35	14
Region			
East	51	31	18
Midwest	63	24	13
South	59	27	14
West	60	24	16

	Alcohol a Serious Local Youth Problem		
	Yes %	No %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**55**	**27**	**18**
Sex			
Men	53	31	16
Women	56	24	20
Race			
White	54	28	18
Nonwhite	59	25	16
Age			
18 to 29 years	60	27	13
30 to 49 years	53	32	15
50 years and over	54	21	25
Education			
Elementary grades	57	23	20
High school	56	27	17
College	50	31	19
Community size			
1 million and over	53	26	21
500,000 to 999,999	57	23	20
50,000 to 499,999	55	25	20
2,500 to 49,999	61	26	13
Under 2,500	52	32	16
Region			
East	49	30	21
Midwest	61	25	14
South	53	28	19
West	56	25	19

Program on Effects of Drugs and Alcohol

The public may never be wholly satisfied with the public schools, but faced with a serious societal problem, they seem ever willing to turn it over to the schools for solution. So it was with the drug and alcohol problems in 1975, as the following question and responses show.

Should the schools in this community require students to attend a program on the effects of drugs and alcohol?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	84	81	87	88
No	11	12	10	8
Don't know/ no answer	5	7	3	4

Public Awareness and Attitudes With Respect to the Supreme Court's Ruling on Suspensions

Some educators were worried about loss of authority as a result of two 1975 U.S. Supreme Court decisions (*Goss* v. *Lopez* and *Wood* v. *Strickland*) requiring school authorities to provide full due process in disciplinary suspension cases involving students. Although only 41% of 1975 poll respondents had heard of the cases, those who had heard of them agreed (67% to 26%) with the Court. The first question:

A U.S. Supreme Court decision requires school principals to give written notice to a student and his parents and to hold a hearing when the student is suspended from school. Have you heard or read about this ruling?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, have heard	41	39	44	47
No, have not heard	55	56	54	50
Don't know/ no answer	4	5	2	3

The second question (asked only of those who had heard or read about the ruling):

Do you think the Court went too far in making this ruling?

	Yes, Court Went Too Far	No, Court Did Not	Don't Know/ No Answer
	%	%	%
National Totals	26	67	7

Generalized Attitudes Toward Student Rights

The above response might have been different had people ignorant of the Supreme Court decisions on suspension been queried. Overall, 1975 respondents tended to believe that students had too many rights and privileges, as the following question and findings show. When the same question was asked in 1972, a somewhat smaller number thought students had too many rights.

Generally speaking, do the local public school students in this community have too many rights and privileges, or not enough?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Too many	45	43	47	56
Just right	27	22	35	22
Not enough	10	10	11	9
No opinion	18	25	7	13

Schools with More Strict Behavior Standards

Gallup observed:

> The growing reaction against low standards of behavior in the public schools is reflected in the responses to a question asking where respondents would like to send their children to school. The option offered was a special public school that had strict discipline, a strict dress code, and placed emphasis on the three Rs.
>
> The special school with more strict behavior standards appeals to all groups, even the group composed of parents of children now attending public school.
>
> The growing attraction of independent schools, which, generally speaking, are more strict in their standards than the public schools, is reflected in the findings. Whereas the national percentage who say they would send their children to such a school is 57%, the comparable figure for parents whose children are now attending parochial or private schools is 70%.
>
> When respondents were asked why they chose the special school, they gave as their reason the fact that children need discipline, strict rules, and respect for others. The next reason, in number of mentions, is the superiority of this type of education to the present public schools in their community. And third is the need for a more strict dress code.
>
> Those who would not send their children to such a school gave as their reasons for holding this view the fact that such a school would stifle the child, that strict discipline is not the answer to the present problems of schools, and that a dress code is not important. Others stated that the present schools were entirely satisfactory.

The question and the findings:

In some U.S cities, parents of schoolchildren are being given the choice of sending their children to a special public school that has strict discipline, including a dress code, and that puts emphasis on the three Rs. If you lived in one of these cities, and had children of school age, would you send them to such a school or not?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, would send children to special school	57	56	56	70
No, would not	33	32	36	22
Don't know/ no answer	10	12	8	8

More Work for Students

Further evidence of the public's negative attitude toward what they regarded as the too-great permissiveness of the public schools came from answers to another question. This one asked respondents if children in the elementary schools of their communities and in the high schools were required to work too hard, or not hard enough.

Parents of children attending public school said that students were not being given enough work to do – both in the elementary grades and in high school. A negligible number – 5% in the case of elementary students and only 2% in the case of high school students – reported that students were made to work "too hard."

Parents with children attending private/parochial schools were even more of the opinion that children in the public high schools were not made to work hard enough. Two-thirds of those in this group said that public high school students were not made to work hard enough.

In general, do you think elementary schoolchildren in the public schools here are made to work too hard in school and on homework, or not hard enough?

What about students in the public high schools here — in general, are they required to work too hard or not hard enough?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Elementary School Students				
Too hard	5	5	5	6
Not hard enough	49	46	53	53
About right amount	28	25	35	23
Don't know/ no answer	18	24	7	18
High School Students				
Too hard	3	4	2	3
Not hard enough	54	53	54	66
About right amount	22	21	24	13
Don't know/ no answer	21	22	20	18

Minimum Requirements for Graduation

One of several problems in obtaining the public's view of the goals of attending school is separating the goals of life from those of the schools. There is also the problem of determining what aspects of education belong more exclusively to the schools than to the home, the church, and other social institutions. In this survey Gallup took a new approach to the goals question by seeking the public's view of minimum high school requirements for students expecting not to go to college. He reasoned that meeting these requirements is almost entirely a school function. Also, the answers would identify specific requirements whose achievement could be determined objectively.

Findings from this survey approach confirm what earlier survey results showed about the pragmatic philosophy of the American people. The priorities they set reflect their attitudes about the chief purpose of the school system: to prepare students to get jobs and to advance in the occupational world.

This question was asked:

What requirements, if any, would you set for graduation from high school for those students *who do not plan to go on to college* but who plan to take a job or job training following graduation? I'll read off a number of requirements, and then you tell me how important each one is as a requirement for graduation for these students. We would like to know whether you think it is very important, fairly important, or not important.

The results below show the percentage of the public who describe each of the nine requirements as being "very important," "fairly important," etc. Percentages are shown in descending order.

Requirements	Very Important %	Fairly Important %	Not Important %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
How important is it that these students be able to read well enough to follow an instruction manual?	96	3	-	1
. . . be able to write a letter of application using correct grammar and correct spelling?	92	6	1	1
. . . know enough arithmetic to be able to figure out such a problem as the total square feet in a room?	87	10	2	1
. . . have a salable skill, such as typing, auto mechanics, nurse's aide, business machines?	85	12	2	1
. . . know something about the U.S. government, the political parties, voting procedures?	75	21	3	1
. . . know something about the history of the U.S., such as the Constitution, Bill of Rights, and the like?	68	27	4	1
. . . know something about the major nations of the world today, their kind of government, and their way of life?	49	40	10	1
. . . know something about the history of mankind, the great leaders in art, literature?	33	44	21	2
. . . know a foreign language?	18	28	51	3

Close agreement was found in the views of all major groups regarding these minimum requirements. Those who did not have children attending school agreed almost exactly with those who did.

Job Training for Out-of-School, Out-of-Work Students

In earlier surveys in this series, people were asked about training programs for students not interested in the usual curricular subjects but still in school because the law required it. The public favored by large majorities all of the proposals for dealing with these young people – all except the plan to let them quit school and go it alone without supervision.

Gallup observed that to date no program had emerged or had been put into effect that would meet the special needs of this group. He added:

> The public schools, if they follow the public's wishes, have an opportunity to work out a special program that will combine educational and vocational training. The public favors giving the schools this responsibility by an overwhelming vote of 86%.
>
> Most European nations have wrestled with this same problem and have devised programs that are successful. And, as a matter of fact, so have some public school systems in the United States.
>
> Many of these programs call for a combination of technical training and on-the-job experience, with attention given to communication and mathematical skills that are deemed essential.
>
> If experiments with this kind of program are devised and tested, almost certainly a way will be found to deal with students in the 15- to 18-year age group who are uninterested in academic subjects and who all too often become troublemakers in school.

The question and the findings:

It has been suggested that the public schools be given the responsibility to set up special job training programs for young people, age 15 to 18, who are out of work and out of school. Would you favor or oppose such a plan?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Favor giving schools this responsibility	86	87	85	84
Oppose	11	9	12	15
Don't know/ no answer	3	4	3	1

The Nongraded Schools

The nongraded school concept has always had wide appeal. In 1975 all major groups of the public favored the idea by margins of more than two to one. Gallup observed, "The high percentage favoring nongraded schools indicates that the public is ready to accept innovations in a period when many persons are inclined to blame new methods and new viewpoints in the educational world for an apparent decline in student performance."

When the same question was asked of the general public in 1972, a slightly higher favorable figure was obtained. In that year, the national totals showed 71% favoring the nongraded school concept as opposed to 64% in the 1975 survey. In the earlier sudy, 22% were opposed, which compares with 28% in 1975.

Should a student be able to progress through the school system at his own speed and without regard to the usual grade levels? This would mean that he might study seventh-grade math, but only fifth-grade English. Would you favor or oppose such a plan in the local schools?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Favor	64	62	66	73
Oppose	28	28	28	25
No opinion	8	10	6	2

Instruction in Morals and Moral Behavior

In the early Seventies there were more than the usual number of advocates for giving the public schools more responsibility for instruction in moral and ethical behavior. When this curriculum addition was offered in a poll question for the first time in 1975, an overwhelming majority of all major groups in the population approved. Significantly, one of the groups most in favor was that composed of parents of children then attending public schools.

Would you favor or oppose instruction in the schools that would deal with morals and moral behavior?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Favor instruction in morals/moral behavior	79	76	84	85
Oppose	15	17	12	13
Don't know/ no answer	6	7	4	2

Censorship by Parents

How much consideration should be given to parents and parental groups who oppose the use of certain books in the public schools? The question was controversial in 1975, as it is today. To obtain the public's general view, the following question was asked:

When parents object to books or material in textbooks on grounds of religion, politics, race or sex discrimination, how much consideration should be given to the parents' views in deciding whether to keep these books in the school — a great deal, some, little, or none?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
A great deal	33	31	37	38
Some	43	44	42	36
Little	12	11	13	14
None	7	7	6	9
Don't know/ no answer	5	7	2	3

Should Public School Teachers Be Permitted to Strike?

In 1975 a plurality of all citizens opposed permitting teachers to strike, but the margin of those opposing to those favoring had decreased since the question was first asked.

In the 1969 survey, two questions were asked: "How do you feel about teachers joining labor unions? Do you think teachers should have the right to strike?" The public at that time, by a small margin, held that teachers should be permitted to join labor unions, but opposed the right to strike by a ratio of 59% to 37%.

The early Seventies saw a considerable growth in teacher associations and unions and an increase in the number of teacher strikes. By 1975 public opposition to teacher strikes had dwindled to a three percent margin (48% opposed, 45% in favor), and there was significantly more support for strike rights among younger and better educated people as well as among nonwhites.

The question and the findings:

Should public school teachers be permitted to strike or not?

	Yes %	No %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	45	48	7
Sex			
Men	49	46	5
Women	42	49	9
Race			
White	44	50	6
Nonwhite	57	28	15
Age			
18 to 29 years	58	36	6
30 to 49 years	46	48	6
50 years and over	35	57	8
Education			
Elementary grades	36	53	11
High school	45	48	7
College	52	44	4
Community size			
1 million and over	46	44	10
500,000 — 999,999	53	42	5
50,000 — 499,999	53	43	4
2,500 — 49,999	42	53	5
Under 2,500	36	55	9
Region			
East	46	46	8
Midwest	46	49	5
South	42	49	9
West	47	48	5

Compulsory Arbitration

While the public was almost evenly divided on the issue of the right to strike by teachers in the public schools, a large majority of all major groups in the population favored settling disputes by compulsory arbitration.

In case an agreement cannot be reached between a teachers union (or association) and the school board, would you favor or oppose a plan that would require the dispute to be settled by the decision of an arbitrator or panel acceptable to both the union and school board?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Favor compulsory arbitration	84	83	86	85
Oppose	7	6	7	9
Don't know/ no answer	9	11	7	6

Principals as a Part of Management

Whether school principals should be regarded as a part of management or as employees – and therefore, with an employee's right to strike – was not an issue insofar as the general public was concerned. Principals were a part of management, in their view.

Eight in every 10 persons in the sample said principals are a part of management; only one in nine held otherwise.

The question and the findings:

Should principals be considered a part of management?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, they should	80	78	81	86
No, they should not	11	11	13	8
Don't know/ no answer	9	11	6	6

Preference for Men Versus Women Principals

The proportion of men serving as school principals had increased at the expense of women in the early Seventies. With new equality laws in effect, the situation seemed to be ready for another change. With this in mind, the following question was offered:

The law may require hiring as many women school principals as men. Which would you personally prefer for this job — a man or a woman?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Prefer man as principal	39	38	41	50
Prefer woman	7	8	5	6
Makes no difference	52	52	53	44
Don't know/ no answer	2	2	1	-

Awareness and Attitudes with Respect to Open Eduation

The concept of open education, which came originally from England and which had been adopted in many schools

throughout the United States in the early Seventies, was still relatively unknown to a majority of Americans. Even parents whose children attended the public schools were largely unaware of it.

Slightly more than one-fourth (27%) of all individuals questioned in the survey said that they knew what is meant by the "open" education concept. When asked to describe, in their own words, what an "open" school is, most of that group proved their familiarity with the idea. Only a negligible few said that it meant "schools open to all."

In the case of parents with children in private or parochial schools, a higher proportion (33%) claimed familiarity with the "open" school concept and, significantly, a higher proportion of this group approved of open education.

The questions and the findings:

Do you happen to know what is meant by the "open" school concept or idea?

If yes:

In your own words, how would you describe an "open" school?

How do you feel about "open" schools? Do you approve or disapprove of them?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Awareness of Open Education				
Said they knew what is meant by open schools	27	24	30	33
Didn't know	60	63	56	54
Weren't sure	13	13	14	13
Attitudes Toward Open Education				
Approve of open schools	13	12	14	18
Disapprove	10	8	12	11
Don't know/ no answer	4	4	4	4
	27	24	30	33

Knowledge About Federal Aid

Earlier, the results of a question seeking to measure support for more federal aid to public schools were presented. Before that question was asked, Gallup asked three others to measure the extent of information people had on current levels of federal aid to schools. The questions and the findings:

Do you happen to know whether the schools in your school district receive any money from the federal government (the government in Washington)?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, they do	50	42	59	57
No, they do not	6	7	6	5
Don't know/ no answer	44	51	35	38

What part of the school budget in your district do you think this federal money represents — a small part, a fairly sizable part, or a very large part of the budget. (Asked of those who said the schools in their school district receive money from the federal government.)

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Small part	17	15	22	20
Fairly sizable part	18	16	20	16
Very large part	6	4	7	10
Don't know/ no answer	9	7	10	11

Chapter 9
The Eighth Annual Poll, 1976

Events of the Year in Education

The cry of "back to the basics" was heard throughout the land. The cry was more strident and more widespread than in any previous year. Conservatives, fundamentalists, taxpaying groups, and critics of the public schools joined in the clamor "to return to the three R's." In a poll conducted by the National School Boards Association, school board members favored, nine to one, greater emphasis on reading, writing, and arithmetic. "Back to basics" was a popular theme for editorials during the year. The topic was discussed at education conventions, in education journals, and at PTA meetings. It was the most talked-about educational issue of 1976.

The public debate showed that back to basics meant different things to different proponents of the movement. A composite list of their demands looked like this:

Greater stress on reading (through phonics), writing, and arithmetic. More classroom drill and recitation. Larger doses of homework. More frequent testing. Traditional grading (A, B, C, etc.) and frequent report cards. Strict discipline and enforcement of student dress codes. Application of corporal punishment under state and local school board policy. Promotion and graduation only on academic merit (no social promotions). Elimination or reduction of electives. A ban on innovations, such as new math and open classrooms.

Educators responded with two widely used slogans: 1) "Get back to the basics? We never left them"; and 2) "We do need to get back to the basics, but first we must identify the basics we want to get back to." Educational groups offered new sets of basics in addition to the three R's: the arts, health education, consumer skills, family and sex education, citizenship and human relations skills.

While many school districts bolstered their fundamental skills curricula, just as many responded to the back-to-basics advocates by instituting minimal competency tests. These were meant to ensure that no student would move from grade to grade or would be allowed to graduate from high school without passing tests proving the student's command of basic skills.

In the midst of the back-to-basics furor came a federal report saying that no mere emphasis on fundamentals would cure the ills of the American high school. Prepared by a panel under the direction of the U.S. Office of Education, the report said that the high school has been trying to do too much for too many different students, adding: "We have drifted into an excessive reliance on the high school as an agency to educate some 18,000,000 young people. . . . This burden must be reduced. . . . The family, the community, the church, and social agencies must be drawn into the task of preparing students for adulthood."

The panel attacked the concept of the comprehensive high school, "which has imposed on a single institution programs and services needed by our extraordinary diverse population." The high school, said the report, must get rid of its global and social goals; it must reduce its nonacademic fat. It must concentrate on teaching students to read widely, write clearly, become proficient in the arithmetic of handling money, learn to use the library, and learn to assemble information from many sources.

The panel said that other educational tasks now burdening the high schools should be carried on by centers under the joint sponsorship of school and community. Thus, the panel said, there should be a school-community center for the arts, for career education, for guidance and counseling, and for learning citizenship skills and taking part in civic and governmental activities.

Coincidentally, how to become involved in civic and governmental activity was demonstrated by the nation's teachers. For the first time in its 119-year history, the National Education Association endorsed a presidential candidate, Jimmy Carter. The American Federation of Teachers had already done so, in conjunction with the AFL-CIO.

As a result, the Democrat from Georgia and his running mate, Walter Mondale, were assured support from two powerful teacher groups totaling more than 2,000,000 members. A good many of these members (certainly not all) launched a vigorous effort in their home communities to bring about the election of the Carter-Mondale ticket and the defeat of Republicans Gerald Ford and Robert Dole. Teachers campaigned by ringing doorbells of would-be voters, making thousands of telephone calls, stuffing campaign literature in envelopes, and writing letters to the editors in favor of Carter.

When the election results came in, teachers took a good portion of the credit for Carter's victory. Education leaders declared they now had a friend of the public schools in the White House. They prophesied that Carter would support legislation for more federal aid to education, the creation of a Department of Education, increased aid for the handicapped, and stricter enforcement of desegregation measures. They said that they could expect no less from Carter, the former Sunday school teacher, school board member, and Georgia governor who had "an admirable track record in education."

To show *his* commitment to the public school system, Carter said during the election campaign: "When Amy, my fourth-grade daughter, comes to Washington, she'll be in the public schools." Friends of public education cheered.

Throughout the year, school boards and administrators were busy with a monumental task: preparing their school systems to educate the handicapped.

Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in November 1975 and gave school authorities until 1978 to put all its provisions to work. There was much work to be done. There were the tasks of finding who the handicapped were, how many there were in each community, where to get new money to launch programs for them, preparing teaching space and equipment suitable for the handicapped, and devising teaching and learning programs for them.

The act had a number of notable requirements. First, it was no temporary measure. Said the U.S. Commissioner of Education, "The Congress voted the act to serve the nation's schools in perpetuity." Second, it covered children as young as 3 years of age, and by 1980 was required to include students up to 21 years of age. Third, for each handicapped student, the school system had to provide an "individualized educational program" developed jointly by teachers and parents (and if possible by the student also).

Rhetoric about the act continued at a high level through the year. Here, said its advocates, was a national instrument "to end the inglorious tradition of treating persons with disabilities as second-class citizens." Here was a Bill of Rights for the Handicapped. Here was the first attempt in civilization's history to develop the talents of all people, regardless of their disabilities.

But the main theme among school authorities was where to find the money and resources, Congressional grants notwithstanding, to do what had to be done.

Despite problems, 1976 was a festive year in education. The nation and its schools observed the 200th birthday of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. A measure of patriotic fever swept many classrooms and school auditoriums as students learned about Thomas Jefferson's ringing statement that all men are created equal and that they are endowed by their creator with unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Students took part in essay and rhetorical contests, saw films about America's beginnings, and became involved in learning projects about the American Revolution and the people who led and won it.

Poll Findings

Several new themes appeared in the 1976 poll. People were asked

- what they would like to see done to improve their local schools;
- to report their attitudes toward tax-supported preschool child care as part of the public school system;
- whether they would pay additional taxes for courses that would show parents how to help their children achieve in school;
- on what kind of school advisory committees they would be willing to serve;
- what important qualities they thought people were neglecting in the development of children;
- what personal qualities they wanted in teachers; and
- whether school expenditures should decline to match enrollment declines.

In his introduction to the poll report, Gallup remarked that the public was now demanding stricter rules in dealing with the behavior of the young and higher standards in the public schools. "A growing demand to place greater emphasis on the basics in the school curriculum is evidenced," he said, "in the findings of the present survey. Meeting this demand could result in higher national test scores and increased respect for the public schools."

School Problems and Ratings

On the two key trend questions of the poll, school problems and school ratings, findings differed little from those of 1975. The questions and the findings follow.

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the *public* schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Lack of discipline	22	20	25	30
Integration/segregation/busing	15	16	13	19
Lack of proper financial support	14	14	14	11
Poor curriculum	14	14	13	18
Use of drugs	11	11	12	7
Difficulty of getting "good" teachers	11	9	14	9
Parents' lack of interest	5	5	4	4
Size of school/classes	5	4	5	4
School board policies	3	2	3	3
Pupils' lack of interest	3	4	2	1
Lack of proper facilities	2	1	14	2
Crime/vandalism	2	3	2	1
Communication problems	1	1	1	3
There are no problems	3	2	6	1
Miscellaneous	8	9	8	2
Don't know/no answer	12	16	7	10

(Totals add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

Students are often given the grades A,B,C,D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A,B,C,D, or FAIL?

	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**13**	**29**	**28**	**10**	**6**	**14**
Sex						
Men	11	32	28	11	4	14
Women	14	27	29	9	7	14
Race						
White	13	30	28	9	6	14
Nonwhite	10	21	33	13	9	14
Age						
18 to 29 years	8	25	33	15	6	13
30 to 49 years	15	30	30	10	5	10
50 years and over	15	31	22	6	7	19
Education						
Grade school	18	22	27	8	5	20
High school	12	27	30	11	7	13
College	11	37	25	9	6	12
Community size						
1 million and over	11	27	32	13	6	11
500,000 — 999,999	11	34	21	13	7	14
50,000 — 499,999	10	26	32	11	10	11
2,500 — 49,999	13	33	25	8	2	19
Under 2,500	17	29	28	6	4	16
Central City	7	21	32	16	11	12
Suburbs	14	34	28	7	5	12
All other	16	30	27	7	3	17
Region						
East	11	31	29	10	5	14
Midwest	16	32	27	8	4	13
South	13	27	29	9	7	15
West	10	24	30	15	8	13

How To Improve the Quality of the Public Schools

After having obtained ratings of their public schools by different groups, Gallup interviewers sought to determine what could be done, in the opinion of respondents, to improve the quality of local education. As an aid, each respondent was handed a card listing a dozen suggestions and had the opportunity to choose as many as he or she wished.

Answers to this question corresponded closely with those given in answers to the question concerning the most important problems faced by the local schools.

The approach shed light on the public's current concern that the schools should "devote more attention to teaching of basic skills." This was the most popular suggestion; 51% of all respondents chose it. Close behind – in fact, with virtually the same number of choices – was the suggestion to "enforce stricter discipline."

The proposals that got the third and fourth highest number of mentions were to "meet individual needs of students," with 42%, and to "improve parent/school relations," with 41%.

The top three choices of parents whose children were attending the public schools were the same as the top three of the general public. Interestingly enough, parents placed even higher on their list, in fourth place, "emphasize moral development," often regarded as the province of home and church.

The question and the findings:

Which of these ways do you think would do most to *improve* the quality of public school education overall?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Devote more attention to teaching of basic skills	51	47	55	60
Enforce stricter discipline	50	47	52	64
Meet individual needs of students	42	39	47	44
Improve parent/ school relations	41	43	36	47
Emphasize moral development	39	34	45	49
Emphasize career education and development of salable skills	38	39	36	37
Provide opportunities for teachers to keep up to date regarding new methods	29	27	32	29
Raise academic standards	27	28	23	38
Raise teachers' salaries	14	15	16	8
Increase amount of homework	14	12	17	21
Build new buildings	9	8	12	7
Lower age for compulsory attendance	5	4	6	1
None	1	1	*	-
Don't know/ know answer	4	4	2	3

*Less than 1%.
(Totals add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

Child-Care Centers as Part of the Public School System

In 1976 the public was not yet ready to have the public school system embrace child-care centers, although the vote on this proposal was close – 46% in favor, 49% opposed, with 5% having no opinion.

The greatest vote of approval came from nonwhites. They voted 76% in favor to 15% opposed. Persons in the 18 to 29 age group also favored the plan by a vote of 64% to 32%. Most opposed were older persons and those who lived in small communities.

The question and the findings:

A proposal has been made to make child-care centers available for all preschool children as part of the public school system. This program would be supported by taxes. Would you favor or oppose such a program in your school district?

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**46**	**49**	**5**
Sex			
Men	46	49	5
Women	46	49	5
Race			
White	42	53	5
Nonwhite	76	15	9
Age			
18 to 29 years	64	32	4
30 to 49 years	43	52	5
50 years and over	35	59	6
Education			
Grade school	45	46	9
High school	47	49	4
College	46	51	3
Community size			
1 million and over	57	40	3
500,000 — 999,999	50	44	6
50,000 — 499,999	48	48	4
2,500 — 49,999	43	51	6
Under 2,500	36	57	7
Region			
East	48	47	5
Midwest	38	59	3
South	52	40	8
West	45	51	4

Live-in Boarding Schools for Children in Bad Home Conditions

Lack of parental interest and responsibility is blamed for the failure of many children to perform in a satisfactory manner in school. In fact, neglected children are almost certain to present a great and continuing problem to the schools. One proposal for dealing with this problem is to put such children in live-in boarding schools, where more attention could be given to them and to their educational needs.

While this proposal was approved by nearly four persons in 10, the public was not ready in 1976 to take on the added financial burden.

The question and the response:

Some children have such bad home conditions that they run away or are unable to function in the regular public school. Should live-in boarding schools be provided at public expense for these children?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, should be provided	39	41	38	35
No, should not be provided	50	46	54	60
Don't know/ no answer	11	13	8	5

Courses to Help Parents Help Their Children in School

Gallup observed:

For many decades, teachers and parents have tacitly accepted something akin to a "territorial imperative." The province of the school was not to be invaded by parents; conversely, the province of the home was off limits to teachers.

This arrangement is rapidly falling apart as it becomes apparent that the schools cannot function properly unless parents cooperate with teachers, and unless teachers give guidance to parents.

It is obvious to parents, and to the public at large, that a new kind of shared responsibility must be accepted if students are to gain most from their education.

Both the public and parents have shown their willingness in previous surveys to work more closely with the schools. What has been lacking is a *modus operandi*. The proposal presented to respondents in the 1976 survey offers one way that the schools can help parents.

Many good ideas for improving education are turned down because they require higher taxes. The real test, therefore, of how much the public really supports a given proposal is to find out if the people who favor it are willing to have their taxes increased in order to put the proposal into effect.

In the case of the proposal to offer courses for parents as part of the regular public school system, those who favor the idea are also ready to accept a tax increase by a ratio of 51% to 21%.

The first question and the response:

As a regular part of the public school educational system, it has been suggested that courses be offered at convenient times to parents in order to help them help their children in school. Do you think this is a good idea or a poor idea?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Good idea	77	76	78	74
Poor idea	19	18	20	25
Don't know/ no answer	4	6	2	1

Of those who approved the idea, this additional question was asked; with the response shown:

Would you be willing to pay additional taxes to support such a program?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	51	50	52	50
No	21	21	21	24
Don't know/ no answer	5	5	5	-

Gallup found it interesting that the youngest age group – those from 18 to 29 years old – overwhelmingly supported the idea, and by a greater margin than the older age groups. Parents of children in the public schools voted 78% to 20% in favor of the proposal.

Citizen Advisory Committees

George Gallup Sr. was a strong advocate of citizen participation in all aspects of public schooling, including the policy making process. He introduced a question on citizen advisory committees with these observations:

> School board members and teachers often complain about the lack of citizen interest in school matters. Lack of knowledge about the problems of the schools, especially the financial problems, all too often results in the defeat of school budgets and school bonds.
>
> Both school and community gain when citizens take an active interest in the schools, but without a way to engage the interest and to involve citizens in school problems, nothing much happens. A few individuals will attend school board meetings. The fact remains, however, that persons in the community who could make the greatest contribution to education have almost no meaningful way to participate.
>
> School boards are typically too busy dealing with financial and staff problems to spend much time on the many educational matters which must be dealt with today. Appointment of citizen advisory committees by the school board offers a practical way – and judging from the survey results, a popular way – to enlist the interest of an amazing number of persons in the community.
>
> That this plan, now followed in some communities, offers great opportunities to involve citizens in the problems of the schools is fully evidenced by the results of the present survey.

The question asked was:

Some school boards have appointed citizen advisory committees to deal with a number of school problems such as discipline, the curriculum, textbook selection, teacher evaluation, the athletic program, and the like. The committees report their findings to the school board for possible action. If such a plan were adopted here (or exists here), which of these problems would *you* most like to deal with on a citizen advisory committee?

> Only 10% of all those questioned said they would *not* like to serve on such a committee or could not make up their minds. While many of the other 90% who chose committees on which they would like to serve might find it impossible or impractical to carry out their intention, still an extraordinary number of persons in a typical community are sufficiently interested to fill places on a score of committees. And, if such committees were appointed, then hundreds of citizens might be involved in local school matters.

Each person interviewed in the survey was handed a card that listed 20 committees. He was asked if he would like to serve on any one; in fact, he could choose as many as he wished.

The following list shows the percentage of respondents selecting each committee as one on which he would like to serve:

Advisory Committees	Percent Who Would Like to Serve on Such a Committee*
1. Discipline and related problems	47
2. Student/teacher relations	31
3. Career education	29
4. Student dropouts	29
5. Teacher evaluation	28
6. The handicapped student	26
7. Educational costs/finances	22
8. The curriculum	21
9. Education for citizenship	19
10. Work-study programs	19
11. Home study and work habits	19
12. Community use of school buildings	16
13. Pupil assessment and test results	15
14. School facilities	14
15. Public relations of schools	13
16. School transportation	12
17. The athletic program	12
18. Educational innovations	12
19. Extracurricular activities	11
20. Progress of recent graduates	9
None	4
Don't know/no answer	6

*Totals exceed 100% due to multiple answers by respondents.

Qualities Most Important in Development of a Child

In a society that constantly changes, the qualities that should be developed in its children will change also. What qualities do Americans today regard as most important? Which should be given the most attention by parents and schools? What are the most neglected?

To shed light on these concerns, the following question was included in the 1976 survey:

Of course all of the qualities listed on this card are important in the overall development of a child. But which *one* do you regard as the *most* important?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
1. Learning to think for oneself	26	26	26	23
2. Ability to get along with others	23	25	20	20
3. Willingness to accept responsibility	21	19	21	26
4. High moral standards	13	11	15	20
5. Eagerness to learn	11	10	13	10
6. Desire to excel	4	6	3	1
Don't know/ no answer	2	3	2	-

All respondents were offered the opportunity to make a second choice among these six qualities. When the second choices are added to the first choices, then "willingness to accept responsibility" moves up to second place, displacing "ability to get along with others," which drops to third place.

Looking at the same list of qualities, respondents were asked:

Which one do you think is most neglected by parents today?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
1. High moral standards	32	29	36	44
2. Willingness to accept responsibility	30	33	29	23
3. Learning to think for oneself	14	15	11	14
4. Ability to get along with others	8	7	9	7
5. Eagerness to learn	5	4	5	2
6. Desire to excel	4	3	5	5
Don't know/ no answer	7	9	5	5

Personal Qualities Desired in Teachers

Just as the school curriculum should change with changing needs, it could be argued that the qualities required of teachers also should change. What did people in 1976 regard as the most important qualities in the ideal teacher?

All respondents were asked the following "open" questions in the 1976 survey:

Suppose you could choose your child's teachers. Assuming they all had about the same experiences and training, what *personal* qualities would you look for?

The qualities named by respondents most often, in order of mention:

1. The ability to communicate, to understand, to relate
2. The ability to discipline, be firm and fair
3. The ability to inspire, motivate the child
4. High moral character
5. Love of children, concern for them
6. Dedication to teaching profession, enthusiasm
7. Friendly, good personality
8. Good personal appearance, cleanliness

All major groups list the qualities most desired in a teacher in almost exactly this same order.

Gallup observed that the ideal teacher, in effect, is one who becomes a model of behavior for the young. "It is not startling to discover this; a survey 100 years ago would probably have revealed the same thing."

Declining School Enrollments

Many school districts were finding, by the mid-Seventies, that because of decreasing birthrates school enrollments were down and might decline even further in the decade ahead. Should educational expenditures be cut commensurately? The public, as the results show here, voted in favor of reducing expenditures.

The question and the findings:

School enrollments in many parts of the nation have declined because of a lower birthrate. If this were to happen here, would you suggest that school expenditures be reduced accordingly?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	55	58	52	51
No	35	31	38	42
Don't know/ no answer	10	11	10	7

When those who said that expenditures should be reduced accordingly were asked to give their views as to what expenditures could be cut in this situation, the greatest number suggested that "the number of teachers should be reduced." Next in number of mentions was "close schools and combine classes." Others gave a miscellany of suggestions, including reducing athletic programs, extracurricular activities, and supplies.

Public Conclusions About National Test Score Declines

The 1975 poll was the first to explore public perceptions and attitudes concerning the decline in Scholastic Aptitude Test scores (best known of the so-called "decline in national test scores"). The 1976 poll pursued the subject, asking if people believed the decline in national test scores meant that educational quality was declining, then again asking what people believed to be the causes of the decline.

Of the results, Gallup said:

> The American people, judging from present and past survey data, do not share the skepticism of many educators about the significance of standardized tests.
>
> They believe, for example, that the decline in national test scores in recent years means that the quality of education today is declining. Of course, the test scores may only confirm what many already think about the schools.
>
> There is surprising unanimity among all groups in the population that the tests are actually measuring a decline in the quality of education. By majorities of about 2-1, all segments of the population, in all areas of the nation, believe that the tests are correctly assessing the situation.

For the record, it needs to be said that in this same year, 1976, the College Entrance Examination Board commissioned a panel of experts to explore the SAT score de-

cline. The commission's report was issued in the fall of 1977. There is insufficient space here to summarize the report, but it must be said that it did little to confirm public perceptions about the causes and meaning of the SAT score decline. Willard Wirtz, chairman of the CEEB panel, said it was surprising, in view of all the social changes of the Sixties, that the score decline was so small. The changing composition of the group taking the test alone could account for the drop; a great many more young people, many of them less gifted academically, were staying in high school and going on to college.

The question and the findings:

Do you believe that a decline in national test scores of students in recent years means that the quality of education today is declining?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, is declining	59	60	58	64
No, is not	31	30	32	28
Don't know/ no answer	10	10	10	8

All respondents were then asked to explain what they thought brought about the decline in test scores. Each was handed a card listing eight reasons, including one for the doubters reading, "The tests are not reliable."

The second question put to respondents was:

Here are some reasons that have been given to explain the decline in national test scores. Will you look over these reasons and then tell me which ones you think are most responsible for this decline.

Respondents, who were permitted to choose more than one reason for the decline in test scores, voted in this manner:

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
1. Less parent attention, concern, and supervision of the child	65	64	65	72
2. Students aren't as motivated to do well	52	50	57	53
3. Too much television viewing	49	48	51	51
4. Society is becoming too permissive	49	47	49	61
5. Teachers are giving less attention to students	39	39	41	32
6. It's easier to get into college now	16	20	10	14
7. Schools are expanding the number of courses offered	10	12	8	4
8. The tests are not reliable	16	15	16	16
Other and no opinion	14	13	15	15

Overall, the public placed the greatest blame for declining test scores on parents, on society, on children's lack of motivation, and on too much television viewing. Interestingly, parents of children attending school most often cited the very same top reason for declining scores: "less parent attention, concern, and supervision." Parents themselves were readily accepting the blame and were not trying to place the burden on the schools.

National Test for Graduation

For the first time in the PDK-sponsored polls, Gallup asked whether a national standard for high school graduation should be established.

The question and the findings:

Should all high school students in the United States be required to pass a standard examination in order to get a high school diploma?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, they should	65	65	66	64
No, they should not	31	30	30	35
Don't know/ no answer	4	5	4	1

Career Education

Sentiment favoring more emphasis on career education continued strong in 1976. In many surveys the public has revealed the belief that public school education should train graduates for jobs. Gallup observed that, because the public sees many unemployed and unskilled young people, it is quite natural and logical for people to conclude that the schools they attend do not give enough attention to job training. What is likely to be overlooked, he added, is the fact that in a technological society there is need for persons with language and mathematical skills as well as mechanical skills.

In the 1965 survey, 80% of the respondents said more emphasis should be given to careers and career preparation in high school. A smaller majority said more information about jobs and careers should be given in the elementary schools. (This kind of education was one of the emphases of then-U.S. Commissioner of Education Sidney Marland.)

The questions and the responses:

Do you think that the school curriculum should give more emphasis, or less emphasis, to careers and career preparation in high school?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
More emphasis	80	80	80	84
Less emphasis	5	4	5	7
About the same as now	11	12	11	8
Don't know/ no answer	4	4	4	1

Do you think the elementary school curriculum should, or should not, include information about jobs and careers?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Should	52	52	53	47
Should not	39	38	38	48
Don't know/ no answer	9	10	9	5

Early School-Leaving Age

Gallup said:

> Some educators see very real advantages in permitting students who meet minimum requirements to leave school early, either to take jobs or to enter junior or community colleges. California has such a law at this time permitting students to leave school early.
>
> In many instances this practice would rid the school of students who are disruptive and who have no interest in continuing their education. On the other hand, it would permit bright students to start their college careers at an earlier age.
>
> The public, however, has never responded favorably toward proposals for changing present regulations about school age. When questions bearing upon this issue have been asked in these surveys, most respondents show reluctance to change the rules now in effect in their communities, either in respect to leaving age or the age at which children start school.
>
> The public has been found willing to provide special schools and special training for students who are unable to keep up with their classes, and other national surveys reveal a willingness to establish training camps on the order of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s. But without some such provision for training and supervision, the public disapproves of letting young people out of school before they reach the legal minimum age.
>
> Parents with children in public school turn down the proposal by a ratio of 69% to 28%. Those with children in the parochial schools like the idea even less. They oppose it by a ratio of 73% to 26%.

The question and the findings:

Currently some states are considering legislation which will permit students to leave school as early as age 14 if they can first pass a test showing that they can read, write, and figure with sufficient skill to get along. Those who pass the test and leave school can take jobs if they wish or go on to community college at an earlier age. Do you approve or disapprove of such a plan for letting students leave school at a younger age?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Approve	30	33	28	25
Disapprove	66	63	69	73
Don't know/ no answer	4	4	3	1

There was close agreement in all segments of society; the vote in nearly every group was about 2 to 1 against. Greatest support for this plan to lower the age of compulsory attendance came from those with the least education. But even this group opposed the idea by 52% to 41%.

Local Responsibility for Education

Historically, state and federal governments have exercised considerable influence on local schools by tying policies to financial grants. The 1976 survey found the U.S. public strongly opposed to giving up local responsibility for the public schools.

The question and the findings:

Local school policies are set, not only by the local school board, but also by the state government and the federal government. In the years ahead, would you like to see the local school board have greater responsibility in running the schools, or less, than they do today?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Greater responsibility	67	65	67	70
Less responsibility	10	11	10	7
About the same	15	15	17	14
Don't know/ no answer	8	9	6	9

How the Public Feels About Unionization of Teachers

Whether teachers should join unions became a highly controversial issue in many areas of the United States during the Sixties. In 1976 most U.S. teachers belonged to unions or associations that bargained over salaries and working conditions. A question was framed to show how the American public appraised this situation. Had unionization helped or hurt public school education? There was a mixed reaction.

The question and the findings:

Most teachers in the nation now below to unions or associations that bargain over salaries, working conditions, and the like. Has unionization, in your opinion, helped, hurt, or made no difference in the *quality* of public school education in the United States?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Helped	22	22	23	24
Hurt	38	38	36	47
Made no difference	27	26	28	25
Don't know/ no answer	13	14	13	4

Older persons were much more likely to say that unionization had diminished the quality of education. The 18 to 29 age group was almost evenly divided. In the bigger cities,

where unions tended to be more militant, a slightly greater number said that unionization had "hurt."

Extending the Scope of Teacher Bargaining

School boards are generally vested with the responsibility for making decisions with respect to such matters as class size, the curriculum, and teaching methods. The public, in 1976, showed its readiness to make these matters subject to bargaining.

The question asked was:

Some teacher groups want to extend their bargaining powers beyond pay and working conditions. They would like to have the right to negotiate about class size, the curriculum, and teaching methods. Would you favor or oppose giving them these added rights?

This is one of the few survey questions in which a significant difference was found between the views of men and women. Men were almost evenly divided on the issue, and women favored the change by a vote of 56% to 33%.

Age also made a great difference. The youngest adult group voted 73% to 21% for extending the scope of teachers' bargaining powers; those over 50 opposed it by a vote by 50% to 38%.

Persons living in the West were almost evenly divided on this issue; those in the Midwest were most in favor of granting wider bargaining rights to teachers.

The findings among major groups:

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**52**	**39**	**9**
Sex			
Men	47	45	8
Women	56	33	11
Race			
White	51	41	8
Nonwhite	62	21	17
Age			
18 to 29 years	73	21	6
30 to 49 years	49	42	9
50 years and over	38	50	12
Education			
Grade school	47	34	19
High school	49	42	9
College	59	37	4
Community size			
1 million and over	54	38	8
500,000 — 999,999	57	36	7
50,000 — 499,999	56	36	8
2,500 — 49,999	49	44	7
Under 2,500	46	41	13
Region			
East	51	39	10
Midwest	55	39	6
South	52	34	14
West	48	46	6

Reducing School Costs

Continuing with a question first asked in 1971, Gallup asked in 1976 what kind of budget cuts the public might approve for their local schools. The results were similar to those for 1971, except that now the public favored reducing the number of administrative personnel by an even more overwhelming vote (72% for, 19% against, as opposed to 50% for and 32% against in 1971).*

The question and the findings:

Suppose your local school board were "forced" to cut some things from school costs because there is not enough money. I am going to read you a list of many ways that have been suggested for reducing school costs. Will you tell me, in the case of each one, whether your opinion is favorable or unfavorable.

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
1. Reduce the number of administrative personnel				
Favorable	72	71	71	80
Unfavorable	19	18	21	15
No opinion	9	11	8	5
2. Reduce the number of counselors on the staff				
Favorable	52	51	54	50
Unfavorable	38	36	38	45
No opinion	10	13	8	5
3. Reduce the number of subjects offered				
Favorable	39	39	38	49
Unfavorable	53	52	56	50
No opinion	8	9	6	1
4. Cut out the twelfth grade by covering in three years what is now covered in four				
Favorable	36	38	34	43
Unfavorable	58	54	63	56
No opinion	6	8	3	1
5. Cut out after-school activities like bands, clubs, athletics, etc.				
Favorable	31	29	33	38
Unfavorable	63	64	63	58
No opinion	6	7	4	4
6. Reduce the number of teachers by increasing class sizes				
Favorable	23	26	21	16
Unfavorable	70	66	74	80
No opinion	7	8	5	4

*Gallup's interviewers do not venture information to respondents. For example, they were not permitted to explain that teacher salaries typically constitute some 80% of a district's total operating expenses. In many larger districts, increasing class size by only one student could "save" more money than the elimination of 60% of the administrative staff.

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
7. Cut all teachers' salaries by a set percentage				
Favorable	18	19	17	16
Unfavorable	74	72	77	78
No opinion	8	9	6	6
8. Reduce special services such as speech, reading, and hearing therapy				
Favorable	10	8	12	7
Unfavorable	85	86	84	89
No opinion	5	6	4	4

Responsibility for Moral Behavior

Gallup said:

> The American people have reached the conclusion that many parents either won't or can't control the behavior of their children. They are ready, therefore, to turn over part of the responsibility to the schools. In the 1975 survey it was reported that 79% of all those questioned favored instruction in morals and moral behavior in the schools. Only 15% opposed the idea. It was also pointed out in the same report that parents of children now in school were, of all groups, most in favor of this instruction.
>
> In the present survey, a sizable majority of those questioned want part of the responsibility for moral behavior turned over to the schools. Just how this can be done raises many issues. A hundred years ago, McGuffey's Readers pointed up a moral in almost every paragraph. Thousands of years ago, parables and folk stories performed this service. The modern equivalent may be the "case history."

The question and the findings:

Parents now have responsibility for the moral behavior of their children. Do you think that the schools should take on a share of this responsibility?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, schools should take on share of responsibility	67	65	69	69
No, they should not	30	31	29	26
Don't know/ no answer	3	4	2	5

Attitudes Toward Juvenile Courts

If the American public was dissatisfied with the handling of discipline in the public schools, they were even more dissatisfied with the workings of juvenile courts. Only 6% said in 1976 that these courts were doing an "excellent" job; on the other hand, 41% said they were doing a "poor" job.

In cities of over one million population, a majority – 53% – said the job being done by juvenile courts was "poor." Both whites and nonwhites registered dissatisfaction with these courts.

The question and the findings:

In your opinion, how good a job do the juvenile courts do here in dealing with young people who violate the law — an excellent job, a fair job, or a poor job?

	Excellent Job %	Fair Job %	Poor Job %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	6	37	41	16

Chapter 10
The Ninth Annual Poll, 1977

Events of the Year in Education

Paddling, caning, and spanking school children has been an ingrained activity for generations the world over. And although educators in the United States were partially successful in abolishing or regulating corporal punishment in the public schools during the 20th century, the practice remained legal in many states. In 1977, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled five to four that the spanking of students by teachers and school officials does not violate the Constitution's ban against cruel and unusual punishment, "even if the spanking is severe, excessive, and medically damaging." The Court added, in its majority opinion, that a student has no constitutional right to have even an informal hearing before the spanking on whether the punishment is justified.

The case came to Washington from Dade County, Florida, where two students, accused of disruptive and troublesome behavior from the second grade on, "were struck more than 20 times with a paddle, causing severe bodily harm." The students and their parents sued. It took more than six years for the case to reach the U.S. Supreme Court. The main argument of the students during those years was that corporal punishment in schools, as in prisons, violates the Eighth Amendment.

The majority of justices disagreed. They wrote that corporal punishment "has been time-honored since our colonial days"; that it continues to play a role in disciplining students today; and that the child does not need the protection of the Eighth Amendment, because states have common-law protections regarding corporal punishment and physical abuse.

Public and professional reaction was mixed. The National Education Association deplored the decision as "an action upholding child abuse." The American Federation of Teachers applauded the ruling, because "students will no longer feel they can defy teachers with impunity." A number of teacher leaders said the classroom teacher needs corporal punishment as "an option" and "as a last resort for dealing with disruptive students." Conservative commentators approved the Court's ruling because "it upholds the authority of educators"; liberal-minded commentators condemned the ruling because "paddling children in school is an abomination."

The High Court was in the news a second time during the year when it heard arguments in the "decade's most controversial education case," *University of California* v. *Bakke*. Allan Bakke, white, a 33-year-old ex-Marine, had applied in 1973 to several medical schools, including the University of California Medical School at Davis. He was rejected by all. Then Bakke noted that 16 places out of 100 at Davis had been reserved for minority students. He decided this was reverse discrimination. He sued, and by the time his case reached the U.S. Supreme Court, Bakke had generated arguments in the education community, in legal circles, and among the people across the land. The Court received 57 legal briefs from 160 interested organizations and individuals both for and against Bakke.

The dispute crystallized a civil rights dilemma with implications for schools and colleges. Should affirmative action plans penalize whites while helping blacks and other minorities overcome the effects of discrimination? Are quotas and a reserved number of places in schools and colleges within the spirit of American equality? And would a Supreme Court decision affect the hiring practices of schools and colleges?

The court hearings became one of the most publicized events of the year. The arguments took place before a tense, packed courtroom, as an overflow crowd of hundreds churned outside the marble-columned building in Washington. For months after the hearings, the Court continued to ask for additional briefs from opposing lawyers and from education organizations.

This was the year when millions of parents, troubled by the power of commercially sponsored television programs over their children, mounted a concerted effort against the evils of most TV programs. Schools, teachers, and administrators joined the campaign. Boards of education urged parents to limit the number of TV viewing hours at home. Teachers asked parents to enforce "no TV on Tuesday," or "tubeless Thursday" plans. Parents heard lectures by child experts that TV "was devouring our children." PTA groups, led by the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, passed resolutions urging local stations to reduce the number of programs featuring violence and sex and demanding better program offerings.

The facts prompting the 1977 protests against TV were striking. Close to 97% of American homes had one or more TV sets, which were turned on for an equivalent of three full days a week. In many homes the set was on from early morning until late at night. Children watched almost from the cradle. Half the nation's youngsters watched between 7 and 10 p.m., and many were still transfixed before the screen after 11 at night. Children spent an average of 15,000 hours yearly watching television, against 11,000 hours yearly in school. When in front of the TV set, children saw an average of 10 acts of violence an hour.

Violence was only one of the factors troubling parents and educators. Child-study experts pointed to the unending flow of programs promoting racial and sexual stereotypes and rampant consumerism. They charged that children were being desensitized, that television was making American youngsters listless and passive and giving them a distorted view of reality.

The television industry remained, for the most part, unconcerned by the protests of parents and educators, even when the home and school increased their pressure against TV from both ends – that is, demanding better programming from the studios and limiting the number of viewing hours by children and youth. Industry spokesmen pointed to the number of educational programs on the air and to the "enormous good" that TV can bring about.

The industry had a powerful case in point in 1977. "Roots," by Alex Haley, a TV saga of a black family, generated cultural and educational excitement unprecedented in the United States. Some 130 million people watched the "Roots" episodes, the largest television audience in the history of the medium. It was unmatched by any other effort concerned with history and literature.

The episodes, based on Haley's book titled *Roots*, traced the history of the author's maternal family from Africa, through slavery in the South, and to eventual freedom in the Reconstruction years. Throughout the United States, among blacks and whites, North and South, the series evoked shock and disbelief, tears and anger.

The educational impact of the series (developed by the American Broadcasting Company) was a rising interest in the history of early America by college students, secondary and elementary school classes, and large groups of adults. College courses, seminars, and workshops dealing with black history and culture became the rage. Social studies teachers introduced new units on slavery, on the contribution of blacks to American life, and on human relations.

Poll Findings

Planners for the 1977 poll found an unusually large number of new topics to explore. Among them: early graduation from high school and college courses in the fourth year of high school; ways of dealing with student absenteeism (including punishment for parents of truants); rearranging school hours for working fathers and mothers; the advantages of schools in small communities; schools and the energy shortage; the back-to-basics movement; the fairness and accuracy of media coverage of the public schools and ways of improving that coverage; decision-making authority for advisory committees; paying for school services to the physically and mentally handicapped; the idea of a separate federal department of education; parent-teacher conferences; parental estimates of the time their children spend on TV, homework, and reading; parental help with homework; and parental fears for the physical safety of their children at school.

The findings on these topics will be reported first here.

Early Graduation from High School

Although the traditional in education always exerts a strong influence in shaping the public's views, wide support was found for a proposal to permit some high school students to graduate early.

This question was asked:

If high school students can meet academic requirements in three years instead of four, should they, or should they not, be permitted to graduate early?

Nationally, 74% of those sampled said that students should be permitted to graduate early; 22% said they should not. All groups in the population favored this proposal – especially those under 30 years of age.

The findings by major groups:

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Should be permitted to graduate early	74	77	68	67
Should not	22	18	31	27
Don't know/ no answer	4	5	1	6

College Courses in Fourth Year of High School

A related proposal also won support among respondents.

The following question was asked:

Should high school courses be arranged to make it possible for some students to finish one year of college work while they are still in high school, so that these students can graduate from college in three years instead of four?

Some 63% of the total sample said that courses should be arranged to allow college work; 31% said no. Young people in particular favored this proposal. The greatest opposition was found in small communities – those which would have the greatest difficulty in providing staff or facilities to add college courses for high school seniors.

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, courses should be arranged to allow college work	63	62	66	63
No, they should not	31	30	31	36
Don't know/ no answer	6	8	3	1

Absenteeism

Few school systems have found adequate ways to cope with the thorny problem of absenteeism. When this survey was taken, one city (New York) had an average of 29% absenteeism in its high schools.

To see what suggestions parents of schoolchildren and others might have, this "open" question was asked:

In your opinion, what can be done by the schools to reduce student absenteeism (truancy)?

Suggestions tended to fall in about equal numbers into three broad categories.

Category 1: Persons who, in general, believe that the schools and the teachers are chiefly to blame for absenteeism.

These typical direct quotations indicate how persons in this category would deal with the problem: "The courses should be made more interesting. Few teachers ever bother to make what they are teaching exciting or important to the students." "Teachers should spend more time with students, be more dedicated, and avoid being clock watchers." "Courses should be more practical, more 'today'-related." "Get the students who stay away from school most often to sit down and talk over their school problems and make their own suggestions about solving the problem." "Incentives should be devised. . . . Have each class compete with other classes. The one with the highest attendance gets a half-day off."

Category 2: Persons who, in general, start with the conviction that parents are chiefly to blame for absenteeism.

Some of their suggestions follow: "Parents, whether they are at home or work, should be immediately notified if their child fails to show up at school." "Parents in many cases do not realize how important attendance is. They should be brought together and told exactly why attendance is so important." "When a child stays away from school the parents should be made to confer with the teachers, with the child present, to find out why." "The schools and the local authorities should get after the parents. Put them on the block and make them see that they are responsible."

Category 3: Persons who, in general, regard truancy as a matter for the police and local authorities.

Some typical suggestions: "More truant officers should be hired and local laws should be strictly enforced." "The police should be ordered to stop any child of school age who is on the streets during school hours. If the child doesn't have a written excuse, he or she should be taken into custody."

Other suggestions: "Children who are frequently absent should have to obey earlier curfew laws." "They should have to make up their schoolwork on Saturdays or during summer vacation." "They should be put to work cleaning up the parks and playgrounds."

Punishing Parents for Student Absenteeism

Since many people hold the view that parents are responsible for their children's absenteeism, this survey explored a proposal that parents be brought into court and fined if their children are chronically truant.

This question was asked:

In your opinion, should, or should not, parents be brought into court and given a small fine when a child of theirs is frequently absent without excuse (truant) from school?

A slight majority of all respondents voted for such a penalty. Parents of schoolchildren, who would be affected by such a ruling, were more evenly divided; yet more of them favored the proposal than opposed it.

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, should fine	51	52	48	46
No, should not	40	39	44	48
Don't know/ no answer	9	9	8	6

Analysis of the vote by demographic groups brought to light these facts: Older citizens favored the proposal; young adults opposed it. The only region of the nation where a majority opposed the plan was the West. Both blacks and whites favored the proposal, as did those in the lowest educational level.

Rearranging School Hours for Working Parents

With an increasing number of mothers having jobs outside the home, the question arises as to whether school hours should be changed so that children will not be left unsupervised in the afternoons while they await the return of their parents. This question was therefore asked:

Most people who have jobs today do not get home from work until 5:00 p.m. or later. In your opinion, should the schools arrange the afternoon school schedule so that children would get home at about the same time as their parents, or not?

Nationally, this proposal was opposed by nearly 2 to 1. Public school parents in particular opposed it. The only demographic group giving it a favorable rating (50% for, 38% opposed) was that composed of persons with only a grade-school education.

The findings by major groups:

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, should change schedule	33	38	22	17
No, should not	59	52	73	76
Don't know/ no answer	8	10	5	7

Advantages of Schools in Small Communities

Gallup said:

> Two to three decades ago it was widely believed that big-city schools, with their large enrollments, were better suited to provide quality education than the schools in small communities. In fact, it was this belief that to a great extent powered the movement for regionalization and for consolidating schools into still larger units.
>
> Today bigness in almost every field is out of vogue. Decentralization is popular in government, business, and (judging from results of this survey) in education as well. The vast majority of persons throughout the nation believe that students get a better education in schools located in small communities than they do in the big cities.
>
> Size alone, obviously, cannot account fully for the disfavor in which many big-city schools are held. The racial mix has changed greatly in the last two decades, with the migration of upper- and middle-class white families to the suburbs.
>
> Apart from the question of quality of education, the fact that most people today believe that education in the small communities is better will almost certainly induce more families with children of school age to leave the city for the suburbs or other small communities.

The question and the findings:

In general, do you think that students today get a better education in schools that are located in small communities or in schools located in big cities?

	Small Communities %	Big Cities %	Makes No Difference %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	68	11	12	9

Meeting Energy Shortages

The very cold winter of 1976-77 closed many schools for varying periods of time. With the prospect of energy shortages in the future, the question arose as to whether schools should close during the coldest weeks of winter.

To get the public's reaction, and especially the reaction of parents with children of school age, this question was asked:

In order to save energy (fuel oil, gas), it has been suggested that the schools be closed in the middle of the winter. Children would make up lost school time by starting the school year in late August and ending the school year around the first of July. Would you favor or oppose adopting this plan here?

The results, nationally, show that the public was opposed to this proposal by the ratio of 56% to 36%, with 8% having no opinion. Parents of children attending public schools were even more generally opposed. They voted against the plan 64% to 32%.

The findings by major groups:

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Favor closing	36	38	32	26
Oppose closing	56	51	64	67
Don't know/ no answer	8	11	4	7

The Back-to-Basics Movement

The reported decline in national test scores and frequent media reports of illiteracy among high school graduates gave impetus to what was widely referred to as the back-to-basics movement in the late Seventies.

To discover how widely known the movement was and to obtain evidence of its popularity, three questions were included in the survey. The first asked simply:

Have you heard or read about the back-to-basics movement in education?

As expected, the better educated and those with children attending school were more familiar with the movement.

The findings:

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, have heard of the term	41	38	47	62
No, have not	57	60	52	36
Don't know/ no answer	2	2	1	2

Many laymen interested in education, as well as educators, think of other subjects as "basic" besides the traditional three R's. But does the general public?

This question was asked, therefore, of those who said that they were aware of this movement:

When this term is used, do you think of anything besides reading, writing, and arithmetic?

Responses to this question, on the whole, indicated that the public regards the basics largely in terms of the traditional three subject areas.

Other subjects are mentioned – history, geography, spelling, citizenship, science, music, art, physical education – but not frequently.

However, many respondents thought of the term, not in relation to subjects or courses, but in relation to the edu-

cational process itself. Thus, "back to basics" was interpreted as meaning a return to schooling of earlier years. To many respondents it means "respect for teachers," "good manners," "politeness," "obedience," "respect for elders," "structured classrooms," "back to the old ways of teaching."

A third question asked of those familiar with the term was this:

Do you favor or oppose this back-to-basics movement?

All groups in the population expressed overwhelming approval of the movement.

	Results Based on Those Aware of Term		
	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**83**	**11**	**6**
Sex			
Men	83	10	7
Women	83	11	6
Race			
White	84	10	6
Nonwhite	75	20	5
Age			
18 to 29 years	79	14	7
30 to 49 years	82	12	6
50 years and over	87	7	6
Community size			
1 million and over	78	12	10
500,000 — 999,999	77	13	10
50,000 — 499,999	85	12	3
2,500 — 49,999	88	5	7
Under 2,500	85	9	6
Education			
Grade school	93	6	1
High school	84	9	7
College	81	13	6
Region			
East	77	15	8
Midwest	89	6	5
South	85	11	4
West	81	11	8

Media Coverage of Education

Educators often complain that the news media give too much play of a negative character to happenings in the public schools. At the same time, they say the media pay too little attention to what the schools are achieving or trying to achieve.

To determine how the public stands on this issue, the following question was asked:

Do you think the news media (newspapers, TV, and radio) give a fair and accurate picture of the public schools in this community, or not?

While many persons agreed with the typical educator's view, a greater number disagreed.

The findings:

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, give fair and accurate picture	42	39	48	41
No, do not	36	34	39	42
Don't know/ no answer	22	27	13	17

Significantly, more parents of children attending the public schools said that the media were fair and accurate than held the opposite view. Only in the Western states did more respondents say that the media were unfair.

Nationally, the results showed 42% saying the media were fair and accurate; 36% saying they were not.

The results by major demographic groups:

	Yes, Give Fair and Accurate Picture %	No, Do Not %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**42**	**36**	**22**
Sex			
Men	43	35	22
Women	41	37	22
Race			
White	42	36	22
Nonwhite	40	35	25
Age			
18 to 29 years	45	37	18
30 to 49 years	46	37	17
50 years and over	37	32	31
Community size			
1 million and over	36	36	28
500,000 — 999,999	46	32	22
50,000 — 499,999	44	38	18
2,500 — 49,999	42	34	24
Under 2,500	43	36	21
Education			
Grade school	32	27	41
High school	42	40	18
College	47	33	20
Region			
East	45	33	22
Midwest	45	35	20
South	40	35	25
West	36	42	22

Improving Media Coverage

To measure perceptions of what the news media could do to better report on local education, all respondents were asked:

In your opinion, how could the media (newspapers, TV, and radio) improve their reporting of education in the local schools?

The answers often referred to the paucity of news about the schools reported in many communities. But the most frequent response dwelt on the need for more positive news: interesting things the schools are doing to achieve their educational goals. Among specific suggestions:

"Reporters should be sent into the schoolrooms to see what goes on there. They should put themselves in the teacher's place, and in the student's place."

"It would be interesting to find out about all the different courses that are offered."

"Reporters should talk to students, explore their problems."

"Why don't they [the media] tell us about the standing of the local schools – how well they do in comparison with the private schools, and with other schools in nearby cities?"

"I should like to know more about the changes that are being introduced and why. There should be more background information about education and about new programs."

"Outstanding students should be written up and praised the way top athletes are."

"An interesting series could be built around the idea of a typical day at school with a typical seventh-grader, ninth-grader, etc. I can remember what went on in my day. I wonder if it is the same now."

"I hear a lot about the gadgets now used in the schools and in the classrooms to teach different subjects such as foreign language, and I would like to know more about them."

"The media report on the school budget, but they never tell, in detail, just where the tax dollars are spent."

"In the magazines I read about 'open' classrooms, 'team teaching,' and such things, and I wonder if our local schools go in for these new ideas."

Decision-Making Authority of Advisory Committees

Gallup said:

> One of the most useful and popular means of increasing citizen participation in school and civic affairs and of taking advantage of the training and expertise of these citizens is to create citizen advisory groups.
>
> The question arises as to how much authority these citizen advisory groups should have. Should final decision-making authority be left with the advisory groups, or should it remain with the school board?
>
> Three questions, probing views in respect to advisory group authority concerning curriculum, staff selection, and the budget, were included in the survey instrument to obtain the views of the public.
>
> The results show that people want the final decision-making authority to remain where it is: with the school board.
>
> Although there is slightly more sentiment for giving advisory groups authority over the budget than over the curriculum or staff selection, the overwhelming majority believes that the school board should retain its present authority.
>
> These findings should not be taken to mean that school boards should not listen to advisory groups on all three matters. However, if the public believes that school boards are making wrong decisions, it has the right to elect new board members.

The first question and the findings:

Many school systems have committees made up of citizens who serve in an advisory capacity. Do you think these advisory groups should have the final decision-making authority over the *curriculum*, or should the final authority remain with the school board?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Authority with citizen groups	17	18	15	23
Authority with school board	71	68	78	71
Don't know/ no answer	12	14	7	6

The second question and the findings:

How about decisions regarding *staff selection* — should the final authority be given to these citizen committees or should the final authority remain with the school board?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Authority with citizen groups	15	15	13	18
Authority with school board	75	73	80	76
Don't know/ no answer	10	12	7	6

The third question and the findings:

And decisions about the *budget* — should the final authority be given to these citizen committees or should the final authority remain with the school board?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Authority with citizen groups	19	20	19	32
Authority with school board	70	68	72	65
Don't know/ no answer	11	12	9	3

Paying for Federally Mandated Programs to Help the Handicapped

In 1975 Congress passed Public Law 94-142 requiring public schools to provide appropriate education for handicapped children. But federal funding adequate to the task was not forthcoming. This and other federal actions resulted in a question for the 1977 poll described as follows by George Gallup:

> Public school and college administrators are becoming more and more vexed by rules and regulations promulgated by Washington that require certain actions to be taken without regard to the additional time and cost entailed.

Making provision for physically and mentally handicapped students is one of these. Local schools are required to bear the added costs of special programs without help, in most instances, from the federal government.

To measure the public's views on this issue, the following question was included in the survey:

Services for the physically and mentally handicapped student cost more than regular school services. When the local schools are required to provide these special services by the federal government, should the federal government pay the extra cost, or not?

The overwhelming majority of those interviewed said the federal government should pay the extra cost of such programs. In fact, every important group in the population and every region of the nation supported the idea that the federal government should pay the extra costs.

	Yes, Government Should Pay Extra Cost %	No, Should Not %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	82	11	7
Sex			
Men	80	13	7
Women	83	9	8
Race			
White	82	11	7
Nonwhite	81	10	9
Age			
18 to 29 years	83	11	6
30 to 49 years	81	11	8
50 years and over	81	11	8
Community size			
1 million and over	83	11	6
500,000 — 999,999	77	16	7
50,000 — 499,999	81	13	6
2,500 — 49,999	78	10	12
Under 2,500	86	8	6
Education			
Grade school	81	8	11
High school	83	10	7
College	79	15	6
Region			
East	85	11	4
Midwest	80	13	7
South	81	9	10
West	79	14	7

Local Control of Federal Programs

Another source of concern in 1977 was the federal government's insistence that local school authorities follow strict regulations when funds were awarded. Often, local authorities had different ideas about how best to spend these funds.

Respondents again revealed their anti-Washington, anti-red-tape attitudes in answers to the following question:

When federal agencies appropriate money for educational programs, they usually require the schools that receive this money to spend it as these agencies direct. Should, or should not, this be changed to permit local school authorities to decide how the money is to be spent?

The nation's adults voted 21 to 1 for giving local school authorities jurisdiction over how money was to be spent to carry out the program locally. Every major demographic group in the population was in agreement on this issue.

The findings by major groups:

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, change to allow local people to decide	62	60	65	67
No, should not change	29	29	29	27
Don't know/ no answer	9	11	6	6

Take Education Out of HEW?

Gallup said:

Frequent complaints are made that the present Department of Health, Education and Welfare is so huge that education is not given the attention that it merits. Some believe that funding of education by the federal government would be increased if it did not have to compete with health and welfare in the same department. Still others believe that public education is so important that it deserves cabinet status in its own right.

For these reasons, the issue was taken to a representative sample of the population for their views. The question asked:

In your opinion, should *Education* be taken out of the present Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and made a separate department of the federal government, or not?

Sentiment on this issue was fairly evenly divided, with slightly more respondents voting to keep education in what was then called HEW rather than make it a separate department.

The results:

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Favor making education a separate department	40	40	40	42
Oppose	45	42	49	47
Don't know/ no answer	15	18	11	11

Foreshadowing the change made in 1980, a plurality of voters in cities of one million and over in population, as well as those living in the East and those who are college-educated, favored making education a separate department in the federal government.

The findings by demographic groups:

	Yes, Should Be Separate Department %	No, Should Not %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**40**	**45**	**15**
Sex			
Men	41	45	14
Women	40	44	16
Race			
White	42	43	15
Nonwhite	30	51	19
Age			
18 to 29 years	44	46	10
30 to 49 years	39	48	13
50 years and over	39	40	21
Community size			
1 million and over	46	37	17
500,000 — 999,999	37	48	15
50,000 — 499,999	39	47	14
2,500 — 49,999	37	50	13
Under 2,500	41	42	17
Education			
Grade school	31	43	26
High school	39	47	14
College	48	41	11
Region			
East	43	41	16
Midwest	36	48	16
South	42	45	13
West	41	43	16

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Gallup said:

> At least in theory, parents should follow the educational progress of their children by holding frequent conferences with their children's teachers. But do they? Obviously, the situation changes from school to school and state to state.

To shed light on the frequency of parent/teacher conferences, this question was asked of those parents who now have children attending school:

Thinking about your eldest child, have you at any time since the beginning of the school year discussed your child's progress, or problems, with any of your child's teachers?

Fieldwork for the 1977 survey was conducted during the period April 28 through May 2, 1977. The figures must be interpreted accordingly. They show that 79% of all parents whose children were 12 years of age and under had talked to one or more of their child's teachers about his/her progress since the beginning of the school year. But only 55% of parents whose children were 13 years old and over had talked to any teacher.

A second question, asked of those who had talked to one of their child's teachers, sought to discover how many conferences had been held:

About how often [have you talked to your child's teachers] since the beginning of the school year?

In the case of parents whose eldest child was 12 years of age or younger, the median number of conferences was two.

The same figure – two – was the median for parent/teacher conferences for parents whose eldest child was 13 years of age or older.

In the year 1977, it appears that during an average period of eight school months, three out of five parents talked to teachers about the progress of their child. And, on the average, these parents, during a period of eight months, held two such meetings.

Parents' Estimates of Time Children Spend on Television, Homework, and Reading

Parents who had children enrolled in the public or parochial and private schools were asked to give an estimate of the time spent, on a typical school day, by their eldest child on television, homework, and reading.

The first question and the findings:

(For eldest child) About how much time does he/she spend looking at television after school hours and until he/she goes to bed, on a typical school day?

(Based on those responding)	By Children 12 Years of Age and Younger %	By Children 13 Years of Age and Older %
No time	2	5
Up to 1 hour	20	26
Over 1 hour to 2 hours	38	33
Over 2 hours to 3 hours	28	17
Over 3 hours to 4 hours	10	11
Over 4 hours	2	8

The second question and the findings:

And about how much time on school homework on a typical school day?

(Based on those responding)	By Children 12 Years of Age and Younger %	By Children 13 Years of Age and Older %
No time	24	15
Up to 15 minutes	3	3
16 to 30 minutes	22	10
Over 30 minutes to 1 hour	29	30
Over 1 hour to 2 hours	17	32
Over 2 hours	5	10

The third question and the findings:

And about how much time on reading — not connected with schoolwork — on a typical school day?

(Based on those responding)	By Children 12 Years of Age and Younger %	By Children 13 Years of Age and Older %
No time	12	28
Up to 30 minutes	43	24
Over 30 minutes to 1 hour	33	28
Over 1 hour	12	20

What this adds up to – for children 12 years and younger – is that the typical child spent approximately:

- 2 hours viewing television on a typical school day,
- 30 minutes reading (not schoolwork), and
- 45 minutes doing homework.

Among children 13 years of age and older, the typical child spent approximately:

- 2 hours viewing television,
- 30 minutes reading (not schoolwork), and
- 1 hour doing homework.

Parental Help with Homework

To find out whether parents help their children with homework, the following question was asked of parents with school-age children about their eldest child:

Do you regularly help your child with his/her homework?

Parents who had children in the public schools and parents of children in the parochial/private schools gave almost exactly the same amount of help to their children.

	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, regularly	24	17
Yes, when he/she needs help	27	32
No	44	41
Don't know/ no answer	5	10

When the age of the eldest child was considered, parents responded in this way:

	Children 12 Years of Age and Younger %	Children 13 Years of Age and Older %
Yes, regularly	37	16
Yes, when he/she needs help	34	26
No	27	58
Don't know/ no answer	2	*

*Less than 1%.

Time Limits on Television Viewing

Gallup said:

> Because the attraction of television is so great for children in most families, many educators have come to the conclusion that definite limits should be placed on the amount of time that parents permit their children to view television during the school week.

To discover how many parents already impose such rules, this question was asked about the eldest child:

Do you place a definite limit on the amount of time your child spends viewing television during the school week?

	National Totals %	Parents Whose Eldest Child Is 12 Years and Under %	Parents Whose Eldest Child Is 13 Years and Over %
Yes, have definite time limit	35	49	28
No	60	50	70
Don't know/ no answer	5	1	2

Safety of Children

Gallup said:

> One of the interesting facts turned up in the present survey is the relatively high percentage of parents (one in four) who fear for the physical safety of their children in school – and 28% fear for the safety of their children in their own neighborhoods. Fewer parents of children who attend parochial school worry about their children's physical safety in school, but still the figure is high – one in five.

The first question asked (about the eldest child):

When he/she is at school, do you fear for his/her physical safety?

	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, fear for safety	25	19
No	69	73
Don't know/ no answer	6	8

The second question asked:

When your child is outside at play in your own neighborhood, do you fear for his/her safety?

	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, fear for safety	28	30
No	68	61
Don't know/ no answer	4	9

Trend Questions

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to results from trend questions asked in 1977. In general, they show little change over the nine-year history of the poll; exceptions are noted.

Major Problems Confronting the Public Schools in 1977

Discipline continued to top the list of major problems facing the public schools of the nation, as it had during eight of the poll's nine years. In fact, the percentage who cited discipline as the major problem was the highest found to date.

Parents of children attending public school, generally considered the group best suited to judge the schools, cited discipline as the number-one problem and by the highest percentage yet recorded.

The problem of facilities seemed near solution. Nine years earlier, "lack of proper facilities" drew enough votes to place it second on the list of major problems. In 1977, for the second straight year, only 2% of the sample cited this as the major problem.

The question and the findings:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the PUBLIC schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Lack of discipline	26	26	27	29
Integration/segregation/ busing	13	13	11	18
Lack of proper financial support	12	11	14	14
Difficulty of getting "good" teachers	11	10	12	19
Poor curriculum	10	9	12	14
Use of drugs	7	8	6	3
Parents' lack of interest	5	5	6	7
Size of school/classes	5	4	7	11
Teachers' lack of interest	5	4	6	5
Mismanagement of funds/programs	4	4	3	5
Pupils' lack of interest	3	3	4	2
Problems with administration	3	3	3	5
Crime/vandalism	2	3	1	1
Lack of proper facilities	2	2	3	—

1977 Ratings of the Public Schools

The quality of education, as perceived by U.S. adults, declined from 1976 to 1977. The 1977 ratings were significantly lower than those of 1974, when the letter rating method was first employed. In 1974, 58% of the respondents gave their local schools a rating of A or B (18% A, 30% B). By 1977 those figures were 37% A or B (11% A, 26% B).

Gallup observed:

> It may bring some comfort to public school educators to know that the ratings given by parents who have children now enrolled in public schools have shown no decline since last year. In fact, if the top two ratings — A and B — are combined, the rating is 54%, which compares with a score of 50% in 1976.

The lowest ratings came from persons who had no children attending school and from those parents whose children were enrolled in parochial and private schools. These two groups were responsible for the decline in the national scores.

Gallup also noted that the number of U.S. families with children of school age had declined. The drop in national ratings of the schools could be explained in part by that fact.

Analysis of the findings by socioeconomic groups revealed that the following groups gave the lowest ratings to their local schools:

1. young adults (18 to 29 age group);
2. residents of cities over one million;
3. persons living in the Western states;
4. blacks, particularly those living in the Northern states.

The question and the findings by demographic groups:

Students are often given the grades A,B,C,D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A,B,C,D, or FAIL?

	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**11**	**26**	**28**	**11**	**5**	**19**
Sex						
Men	11	25	30	11	5	18
Women	11	28	26	12	4	19
Race						
White	12	27	28	11	5	17
Nonwhite	8	23	25	14	5	25
Age						
18 to 29 years	5	25	38	16	4	12
30 to 49 years	15	28	28	10	6	13
50 years and over	13	26	20	9	4	28
Community size						
1 million and over	10	20	28	13	10	19
500,000 — 999,999	11	26	30	11	4	18
50,000 — 499,999	12	27	25	11	4	21
2,500 — 49,999	11	32	26	9	4	18
Under 2,500	12	27	31	11	3	16
Education						
Grade school	17	17	20	5	8	33
High school	10	27	31	12	4	16
College	10	30	26	14	5	15
Region						
East	15	25	31	8	5	16
Midwest	10	29	28	11	3	19
South	13	28	25	10	3	21
West	6	21	28	17	9	19

What's Particularly Good About the Local Schools?

To provide an opportunity for respondents to tell what they thought was particularly good about the local schools, the following question, asked in some of the earlier surveys in this series, was repeated:

In your own opinion, in what ways are your local *public* schools particularly good?

The two responses offered most frequently were "the curriculum" and "the teachers." These have also been the two most frequently mentioned in earlier surveys. Here are the top 10 responses, in order of mention:

1. The curriculum
2. The teachers
3. Extracurricular activities
4. School facilities
5. Equal opportunity for all students
6. Good administration
7. Parental interest/participation
8. Good student/teacher relationships
9. Good discipline
10. Small school or small classes

Courses for Parents on How to Deal With Their Children's Problems

Gallup said:

> Throughout the nation there is wide acceptance of the view that parents must work closely with the schools if students are to reach their full educational potential.
>
> Problems of discipline, motivation, poor work and study habits, drug and alcohol addiction, and many others normally have their origin in the home. Unless something is done to correct the home situation, the best efforts of teachers will fail.
>
> It is probably no exaggeration to say that the next great advance in education will come when parents and teachers work as a team, with parents taking full responsibility for problems that arise in the home.
>
> The 1976 survey revealed that more than three in every four U.S. adults approve of the idea of offering courses to parents as a regular part of the public school educational system. And parents of schoolchildren in the public schools voted nearly 4-1 for this plan. As further evidence of their approval, they said they were willing to pay additional taxes to support such a program.
>
> In fact, in every survey in which this proposal to help parents, through a course of instruction, to help their children in school has been asked, sizable majorities have voted in favor of such courses.
>
> In the present survey an effort was made to discover the specific subjects that might be included in such a course for parents. Presumably, if the plan were to be carried out by a school, then the parents of children in a given grade would meet together to discuss the problems of children of that age.

From a total of 16 suggested topics, parents of children now attending school were asked to choose those that interested them most.

The question was worded:

The subjects listed on this card are some that could be covered in a special course for parents offered by the local schools. Which of these subjects would interest you the MOST?

A card was then given to each respondent, with 16 suggested topics. Listed below in order of mention are the 16 suggested topics for parents whose eldest child was 13 to 20 years of age.

1. What to do about drugs, smoking, use of alcohol
2. How to help the child choose a career
3. How to help the child set high achievement goals
4. How to develop good work habits
5. How to encourage reading
6. How to increase interest in school and school subjects
7. How to help the child organize his/her homework
8. How to improve parent/child relationships
9. How to improve the child's thinking and observation abilities
10. How to deal with the child's emotional problems
11. How to use family activities to help the child do better in school
12. How to improve the child's school behavior
13. How to reduce television viewing
14. How to help the child get along with other children
15. How to improve health habits
16. How to deal with dating problems

Ranked below in order of mention are the 16 suggested topics for parents whose eldest child was 12 years or younger.

1. What to do about drugs, smoking, use of alcohol
2. How to help the child set high achievement goals
3. How to develop good work habits
4. How to improve the child's school behavior
5. How to improve the child's thinking and observation abilities
6. How to deal with the child's emotional problems
7. How to increase interest in school and school subjects
8. How to help the child organize his/her homework
9. How to improve parent/child relationships
10. How to help the child choose a career
11. How to use family activities to help the child do better in school
12. How to encourage reading
13. How to help the child get along with other children
14. How to reduce television viewing
15. How to deal with dating problems
16. How to improve health habits

Gallup observed:

> Experience in carrying out such a program of instruction would undoubtedly uncover other areas to include in future courses.
>
> Significantly, the topics selected as most interesting by parents who have attended college are not markedly different from the topics regarded as most interesting by those who have had little schooling. This would indicate that home problems are very much the same in the best-educated, highest-income families and those farther down on the socioeconomic scale.
>
> In short, virtually all parents freely admit that they need help, and they would like to have the local schools offer this help and guidance by regular courses and by discussion.

Tenure

Gallup said:

> A recurring issue of recent years has to do with tenure for teachers. During the nine years that these studies dealing with the public's attitudes toward the public schools have been conducted, views on tenure have been probed on three occasions by questions that contained an explanation of the issue.
>
> The point often arises, however, as to how many persons in the general public are familiar with the term "tenure" and how persons who are better informed in this respect view the problem.

In this connection, a question was first asked of all persons included in the survey:

Do you happen to know what the word "tenure" means as it applies to teachers' jobs?

A second question asked of those who replied "yes":

Just as you understand it, what does tenure mean?

A third question, limited to those who gave a correct answer, asked:

Do you favor or oppose tenure for teachers?

A total of 28% of the adults interviewed nationally could give a correct definition of tenure as it applies to teachers' jobs.

When persons who knew what the term means were asked whether they favor or oppose tenure, a majority said they oppose tenure. The same conclusion was reached in the three earlier surveys in which tenure questions were asked.

Persons who had no children in the schools were more likely to favor tenure than those who had children in school. Among the former, 44% favored tenure and 45% opposed it; in the case of parents with children in the public schools, 54% opposed and 37% favored it. In the case of parents with children in parochial or private schools, 84% opposed and 16% favored tenure.

The findings by major groups:

(Based on those who know what the term means)	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Favor tenure	40	44	37	16
Oppose	50	45	54	84
Don't know/ no answer	10	11	9	–

Chapter 11
The Tenth Annual Poll, 1978

Events of the Year in Education

A taxpayers' revolt erupted in California and caused minor and major shockwaves among educators across the country. By a two-to-one margin, California voters approved Proposition 13, which required the state to reduce 1977 property tax bills by 57% and to sharply restrict future taxation for government services. Educators in California were prepared for cutbacks in school services, and educators in other parts of the country feared that Proposition 13 would catch fire and jump across state lines.

The 1978 elections tested the strength of Proposition 13. Voters in 16 states approved a variety of tax-limiting initiatives, some severe, some mild, some merely advisory. None threatened the vitality of the public schools.

But the real test of Proposition 13 took place in California itself, where few of the dire predictions of tax-cut consequences came to pass. No permanent California teachers lost their jobs, and few districts curtailed educational services.

Nevertheless, Proposition 13 carried a message for the nation's school administrators. It was: Re-examine school programs, reduce waste, find out what the people want and do *not* want from their schools, and try to do more and better with less and less.

Another move that some feared would threaten the public schools came a cropper during the year. For some years, lobby groups tried to convince Congress it should provide up to $500 in federal income-tax credits to parents who pay tuition to private elementary and secondary schools and colleges. A bill seeking that objective got nowhere in the U.S. House of Representatives; and when a similar measure came to a vote in the Senate, it was rejected.

Some observers have called 1978 the year of the teacher centers, and the centers themselves "the most innovative ventures in teacher education in more than a generation." The federal government took note of the new institutions by allocating $7.5 million in grants to help local school districts and colleges expand the teacher center influence.

What is a teacher center? Observers came up with an assortment of replies: It is a place, a facility, an advisory, an inservice education medium, a place where teachers help each other. They also described the teacher center as a place where teachers examine ideas, probe into concepts of teaching and learning, and remind themselves what the learner's world is all about.

Teacher centers came into being in Great Britain, and this idea was adopted in the United States first by a small number of school districts. Then the concept was incorporated in an amendment to the Higher Education Act of 1978 and was defined by Congress as a site that serves teachers and in which teachers may develop and produce curricula, utilize research findings, and become better able to meet the needs of students.

There was general agreement that a teacher center should function within a school system under board of education policy. But here questions arose: Would teachers be free to carry on their work without board intervention? Would they be able to deal with problems of concern to teachers without control by administrators? Should a center advocate an educational point of view (smaller classes, for example, or abolition of corporal punishment) or stay clear of educational policy questions?

As the year ended there were no answers. Said one director of a teacher center: "The movement is too young to worry about such weighty questions."

This was the year when a young, black minister with a fiery style caught the attention of the education community. He was the Reverend Jesse Jackson; and he was attracting attention, praise, criticism, and money for his venture.

His venture was PUSH, People United to Save Humanity, and its educational arm was Project Excel. The Reverend Jackson preferred to call Excel, "a crusade to raise the achievement of black and poor students." The action started, usually in a ghetto school, with a rousing speech by Jackson in which he called students to declare that they had pride and self-esteem and would dedicate themselves to work and study. To take part in Excel, students were asked to sign a pledge to study two hours every evening with radio, TV, and stereo off and with no telephone interruptions. Parents had to pledge to monitor their children's study hours, pick up their report cards every grading period, and confer with teachers about test scores. Principals pledged to define educational goals for the students, establish rules for school behavior, set expectations for students-and-teachers, and set up plans for achieving educational goals.

Because Excel was praised by a number of ghetto schools, the U.S. Office of Education granted Jackson $400,000 during the year to further the project's purposes.

But criticism of the program came from both whites and blacks. White educators saw little in Excel that would be useful to the majority of secondary students. Many were not impressed with Jackson's rhetoric and saw the actions he preached as largely cosmetic. Some black educators, equally unimpressed with slogans shouted by students, argued that only fundamental changes in curriculum and school services for blacks and poor students could bring lasting benefits to them.

Teacher strikes, almost unheard of until the 1950s, became common during the 1960s and in 1978 reached a record num-

ber. By late fall, 205 such "job actions" were recorded by the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers. Some teacher strikes were of short duration, lasting a few days; others stretched into weeks. Most were relatively peaceful; but in at least a dozen instances teachers were jailed for refusing court orders to end their actions, their associations were heavily fined, and their leaders were fired by boards of education.

The most frequent reason for teacher strikes was disagreement between teacher associations and boards of education over salary and fringe benefits. In 1978 teachers demanded salary increases of between 10% and 15%, with boards willing to grant between 3% and 5%. But other issues were not far behind. Among them were arguments over class size, charges by teachers that administrators did not enforce student discipline codes, teacher demands for planning time, and teacher accusations that boards of education failed to provide due process in dismissal and grievance cases or failed to negotiate in good faith.

"There could have been many more job actions in 1978," the NEA said, "but it appears that collective bargaining is working as it should. Teachers have become increasingly sophisticated in the bargaining process and most school boards acknowledge that bargaining is here to stay. Further, teachers have become aware that some boards will try to provoke walkouts to save money and arouse community sentiment against teachers. Teachers aren't letting this happen. They use the strike only when it's the only way to win their educational and professional priorities."

A footnote to educational developments of 1978: Almost as an anti-climax to the furor the year before created by the *Bakke* case, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled during the year that 1) college admissions favoring blacks and other minorities are constitutional, but 2) Allan Bakke, white, cannot be denied admission to a medical college because of his race. It was a yes-and-no decision. Experts studying the Court's words decided "there has been no erosion to the rights of minorities and that affirmation action remained very much alive."

Poll Findings

Although answers to open-ended questions are harder to tabulate and analyze properly, one of them was used with interesting results in the tenth poll. It was:

What, if anything, do you think the public schools in this community should be doing that they are not doing now?

Gallup said:

> If school authorities were to take time to talk to a representative sample of people in their school districts to obtain their ideas as to what the schools might be doing that they are not now doing, they would likely find that the public's suggestions fall chiefly into seven categories. The number and type of suggestions obviously would differ from school district to school district. But for the nation as a whole, they range in the order below:
>
> 1. *More strict discipline.* This, of course, has been a constant complaint of the public for the last decade, as reported in this survey series.
>
> The public is bothered by the lack of respect shown to, or demanded by, teachers. They read about the chaos in classrooms. They complain that teachers let children do anything they wish, dress any way they want, pay no attention to school rules, stay away from school whenever they feel like it.
>
> 2. *Better teachers.* By "better teachers," the public does not necessarily mean teachers who are better trained or more knowledgeable in the subjects they teach.
>
> They are much more inclined to think of "good" teachers as the teachers who take a personal interest in each student, who try to understand each student and his or her problems, who encourage students in the subjects taught so that they will achieve high grades, and, finally, who inspire students to set high goals in life for themselves.
>
> 3. *Back to basics.* This movement has support throughout the nation and, of course, many school systems have already made changes to give more attention to the so-called basics. Even so, many people want greater emphasis placed upon what they often describe as the "fundamentals," meaning reading, writing, and arithmetic.
>
> 4. *More parental involvement.* A frequent suggestion is for closer teacher/parent relationships. Many complain that teachers show a poor attitude in communicating with parents. They suggest more conferences between parents and teachers. They would like to know much more about what parents can do in the home to help their children in school.
>
> 5. *Higher scholastic standards.* The public has been made aware through the media of declining test scores throughout the nation. People read about automatic promotion and about young persons who are graduated from high school but who can barely read or write. They complain that not enough homework is given to their children. Some say the school day should be longer. They say it is too easy to get good grades.
>
> 6. *More education about health hazards.* The widespread use of alcohol, drugs, marijuana, and cigarettes by young people has become an important worry to many parents. They want help from the schools. They want schools to point out the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse and smoking, and they want the schools to establish rules that will be a deterrent.
>
> 7. *More emphasis on careers.* Parents whose children do not intend to go on to college want to be sure that their children are ready to fill some kind of job after they are graduated. Even in the case of those whose children plan to enter college, parents see a need to give guidance about careers that are available, the abilities required, and the rewards offered in different occupations.

These findings can be compared with those obtained from a similar but closed-ended question used in the 1976 poll: Which of these ways do you think would do most to *improve* the quality of public school education overall? In that poll (see p. 68), "devote more attention to teaching of basic skills"

and "enforce stricter discipline" were chosen by 51% and 50% of the respondents, respectively. The fact that respondents chose from statements prepared after field work by the Gallup Organization no doubt accounts for some of the differences in response.

Automatic Promotion

Gallup said:

> If a national referendum were held on the promotion issue, a majority of more than 2-1 would favor promoting children from grade to grade only if they can pass examinations. Answers to a second question asked of all respondents should give some comfort to those who oppose such a requirement. By an even larger majority, the public would favor offering special remedial classes in the subjects students fail and not require students who fail to repeat the whole year's work.
>
> This leaves unanswered the question of what to do with those students who do not pass the examinations even after they have received extra instruction.

The question was:

What do you think should be done with students who do not pass the examinations even *after* they have received extra instruction?

Gallup said:

> Here the public is divided on the policies to be followed, with about half saying that in this situation the child should repeat the grade and the rest suggesting further help or placing the child in a special program.
>
> An interesting aspect of the public's views on automatic promotion comes to light in an examination of the groups who support and those who oppose automatic or social promotion. Those who are most likely to have children who fail in their schoolwork – poorly educated parents – are the ones most in favor of requiring students to pass tests for promotion. At the other extreme, persons who have completed high school or college are most in favor of automatic or social promotion.
>
> Those persons interviewed in the survey who have no children of school age are more in favor of the test requirement for promotion than those who now have children attending the public or the nonpublic schools.

The question and the findings:

In your opinion, should children be promoted from grade to grade *only* if they can pass examinations?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, they should	68	71	60	59
No	27	24	35	38
Don't know/ no answer	5	5	5	3

The next question asked and the findings:

Should students who fail be required to take special remedial classes in the subjects they fail or should they be required to repeat the whole year's work?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, special remedial classes	81	80	82	87
No, repeat whole year's work	14	14	14	9
Don't know/ no answer	5	6	4	4

Local, State, or National Tests?

If promotion and graduation are to be based on tests, who should prepare the tests – the local school system, the state, or the federal government?

The public was divided on this issue in 1978, but a plurality favored having such examinations prepared by the local school system.

Gallup said:

> Obviously, this is a question that needs to be debated at great length. The arguments pro and con are not well known to the general public; the answers, therefore, should be regarded as indicative but by no means final.

The question and the findings:

Some people believe that since every community has a different racial and occupational mix, tests given in different subjects for promotion should be prepared for that school system only. Other people think the tests should be prepared on a statewide basis. Still others think that they should be prepared on a national basis to be given to students in the same grade throughout the nation. Which of these three ways would you prefer — having tests prepared on a local, state, or national basis?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Tests should be prepared on a:				
Local basis	37	38	36	38
State basis	25	24	27	19
National basis	28	27	30	39
Don't know/ no answer	10	11	7	4

Equal Educational Opportunity

A wide difference of opinion was found between the views of whites and blacks on the question of equal educational opportunity. By a margin of 52 to 38, nonwhites held the view that minorities did not have the same educational opportunities as whites. On the other hand, whites were overwhelmingly of the opinion that blacks did have the same educational opportunities.

An interesting difference came to light when the views of Northern blacks are compared with the views of Southern blacks, as the following table shows.

The question and the findings:

In your opinion, do black children and other minorities in this community have the same educational opportunities as white children?

	Yes, They Do %	No, They Do Not %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Southern whites	85	10	5
Southern blacks	54	37	9
Northern whites	86	8	6
Northern blacks	21	67	12

It will be noted from the responses to another question in this survey that Northern blacks gave their public schools the lowest rating of all groups in the nation, whereas Southern blacks gave the public schools in that part of the nation a favorable rating, comparable to that given by whites.

Parents with children in the schools – both public and nonpublic – said by a large majority that blacks have the same educational opportunities as whites, as the following results show:

	Same Educational Opportunities?			
	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, same opportunities	80	78	86	82
No	14	15	11	14
Don't know/ no answer	6	7	3	4

Further breakdowns:

	Yes %	No %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**80**	**14**	**6**
Sex			
Men	80	15	5
Women	80	13	7
Race			
White	86	8	6
Nonwhite	38	52	10
Age			
18 to 29 years	74	19	7
30 to 49 years	80	15	5
50 years and over	85	9	6
Community size			
1 million and over	63	29	8
500,000 — 999,999	81	14	5
50,000 — 499,999	82	13	5
2,500 — 49,999	85	10	5
Under 2,500	88	5	7
Education			
Grade school	75	16	9
High school	83	11	6
College	78	16	6

Use of Marijuana, Hard Drugs, and Alcohol

The 1978 survey asked specifically, in three separate questions, if the use of marijuana, alcohol, and hard drugs (heroin, cocaine) were a serious problem among students in local junior and senior high schools. The findings show that a majority of people believed that use of these substances did pose a serious problem. This was true in all sections of the country, in small as well as large communities. But there were important demographic differences, as the breakdowns below show.

The first question and the findings:

From what you have heard or read, is the use of marijuana by students enrolled in junior high (middle school) or high school here a serious problem, or not?

		Marijuana Use		
	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, it is a serious problem here	66	65	65	75
No, it isn't	20	19	22	17
Don't know/ no answer	14	16	13	8

Note that persons presumably best informed – those with children in the public schools – have beliefs that parallel those of the nation as a whole. Further breakdowns:

	Yes, Is Serious %	No, Is Not %	Don't Know No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**66**	**20**	**14**
Sex			
Men	64	23	13
Women	67	17	16
Race			
White	66	20	14
Nonwhite	63	17	20
Age			
18 to 29 years	61	28	11
30 to 49 years	63	22	15
50 years and over	72	12	16
Community size			
1 million and over	66	17	17
500,000 — 999,999	65	22	13
50,000 — 499,999	71	17	12
2,500 — 49,999	67	20	13
Under 2,500	61	23	16
Central city	74	16	10
Education			
Grade school	70	10	20
High school	68	19	13
College	59	27	14

In almost the same proportions as for marijuana, people believed that drinking alcohol (in beer, wine, and hard liquor) was a serious youth problem. The question and the findings:

What about the use of alcohol (beer, wine, liquor) by students here? Is it a serious problem, or not?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, it's a serious problem here	64	67	60	58
No, it isn't	19	17	23	17
Don't know/ no answer	17	16	17	25

The use of hard drugs (heroin, cocaine, etc) was regarded as a serious problem for junior and senior high school students in their communities by a third of those interviewed throughout the nation. However, about one person in four claims not to be well enough informed to have an opinion.

Contrary to the replies concerning marijuana and alcohol, respondents said that hard drug use was much more common in the bigger cities than elsewhere. But even respondents in the smallest communities reported some use.

Northern blacks were most inclined to report use of hard drugs as a serious problem in the schools attended by local children. As the following results indicate, a wide difference of opinion was found between the North and the South:

	Hard Drug Use		
	Yes, a Serious Problem Here %	No %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Race/region			
Southern whites	29	49	22
Southern blacks	23	51	26
Northern whites	36	39	25
Northern blacks	59	27	14
Community size			
1 million and over	49	29	22
500,000 — 999,999	39	37	24
50,000 — 499,999	39	41	20
2,500 — 49,999	29	41	30
Under 2,500	21	52	27
Central city	52	34	14
Education			
Grade school	40	25	35
High school	37	40	23
College	29	50	21
Region			
East	34	37	29
Midwest	39	39	22
South	28	49	23
West	41	36	23

Persons with no children in the local public schools were more inclined than public school parents to say that hard drug use was a serious problem for junior and senior high school students in their community.

The question and the findings by major groups:

What about hard drug use (heroin, cocaine, etc.)? Is it a serious problem among students here?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, it's a serious problem here	35	38	26	40
No, it isn't	41	38	49	37
Don't know/ no answer	24	24	25	23

Adult Education

The 1978 survey found a surprisingly large number of individuals throughout the nation interested in taking special adult education courses or training. Of course, many factors enter into a decision to continue one's education; for example, time, availability, cost. But the survey strongly suggests that, through proper planning, local school systems could make better use of their facilities by expanding adult education courses.

Nearly a third of all adults in the sample claimed to have taken, at some time in their lives, adult education courses. Of those who had taken a course at some time, about one adult in nine (11%) said that he or she had taken such a course during the last year, 7% said one to three yeras ago, and 12% said over three years ago, with 1% giving no response.

The following questions were asked first:

Are you now taking, or have you ever taken, any courses in an adult education program? (If yes) When was that?

All of those reached in the survey were then asked:

Would you be interested next year in taking any special courses or training in any fields or in any subjects? (If yes) In what?

Four in 10 of those questioned (41%) said they would be interested in taking such a course or training. If this percentage is applied to the whole adult population, a staggering number – 60 million – said they would be interested. But this number has to be heavily discounted, because few schools can offer courses at the right time and at the right cost. However, the figures do indicate that there is room for much expansion in the field of adult education.

What courses or training would interest these individuals? When asked specifically to name the courses or training, respondents fall into four main categories (ranked in order of mention):

1. Job-related courses (typing, accounting, computers, general business economics, etc.)
2. Liberal arts (English, mathematics, art and music, science, etc.)
3. Technical-vocational courses (auto mechanics, carpentry, drafting, etc.)
4. Hobbies (arts and crafts, photography, sewing, cooking, home decorating, etc.)

The findings:

Have You Ever Taken Any Adult Education Courses?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, have taken adult education courses	31	29	34	41
No, have not	68	70	65	59
Don't recall/ no answer	1	1	1	*

*Less than 1%

More adults with children attending school claimed to have taken an adult education course than adults without children. When asked about taking a course next year, a greater number of parents of public and parochial school children said they would be interested than did those with no children attending school.

Would You Be Interested Next Year in Taking a Course?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, would be interested	41	36	54	54
No, would not	54	59	41	43
Don't know/ no answer	5	5	5	3

The Importance of a College Education

A question about the importance of a college education, first asked in 1974, was repeated in 1978 with very similar results. The question and the findings:

How important is a college education today — very important, fairly important, or not too important?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Very important	36	35	38	34
Fairly important	46	44	48	54
Not too important	16	19	12	11
Don't know/ no answer	2	2	2	1

Further breakdowns:

	Very Important %	Fairly Important %	Not Too Important %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Race				
White	35	47	16	2
Nonwhite	46	32	18	4
Community size				
1 million and over	41	39	18	2
500,000 — 999,999	35	45	19	1
50,000 — 499,999	38	46	14	2
2,500 — 49,999	36	44	18	2
Under 2,500	31	51	16	2
Education				
Grade school	44	33	18	5
High school	34	46	19	1
College	35	52	11	2
Region				
East	38	47	13	2
Midwest	32	49	17	2
South	40	44	14	2
West	35	40	24	1
Income				
$20,000 & over	33	49	16	2
$15,000 — $19,999	31	53	14	2
$10,000 — $14,999	33	40	26	1
$7,000 — $9,999	37	48	15	—
Under $7,000	45	39	13	3

Gallup said:

> One of the most interesting findings from the present survey is that persons in the disadvantaged categories, both in terms of race and income, are the ones who place the greatest importance on a college education.
>
> In fact, the groups attaching the highest importance to a college education are blacks, individuals whose education did not go beyond grade school, and those earning less than $7,000 a year.

Minimum Requirements for Graduation

In 1978, most of the states were considering minimum requirements for graduation from high school. In effect, these requirements would apply chiefly to students who did not intend to enter college but planned to take a job, or job training, after they finished high school. Typically, colleges set their own admission requirements.

Because of the interest in minimum requirements, a question asked in the 1975 survey was repeated in 1978. Ten areas of learning were covered, and respondents were asked in the case of each to say whether in their opinion the requirement as stated was "very important," "fairly important," or "not important."

Requirements that topped the list were writing, reading, and arithmetic. Two others also got high scores: knowing the health hazards of smoking, alcohol, and drugs; and having a salable skill, such as typing, auto mechanics, etc.

The three requirements that received less than a 50% vote as "very important" were knowledge of world affairs, the history of mankind, and knowing a foreign language.

Results from the 1978 question were approximately the same as those for 1975. One question was added to the 1978 list – the question dealing with health hazards – and a slight change was made in the wording of the question dealing with reading.

The results below show the percentage of all respondents who regarded each requirement as "very important," "fairly important," and "not important." The results have been listed in descending order, based on the percentage who said the requirement is "very important."

What requirements, if any, would you set for graduation from high school for those students *who do not plan to go on to college* but who plan to take a job or job training following graduation? I'll read off a number of requirements, and then you tell me how important each one is as a requirement for graduation for these students. We would like to know whether you think it is very important, fairly important, or not important.

	Very Important %	Fairly Important %	Not Too Important %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
How important is it that these students . . .				
. . . be able to write a letter of application using correct grammar and correct spelling?	90	9	*	1
. . . be able to read well enough to follow an instruction manual for home appliances?	86	12	1	1
. . . know enough arithmetic to be able to figure out such a problem as the total square feet in a room?	84	14	1	1
. . . Know the health hazards of smoking, use of alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs?	83	14	2	1
. . . have a salable skill, such as typing, auto mechanics, nurse's aide, business machines?	79	17	3	1
. . . know something about the U.S. government, the political parties, voting procedures?	66	30	3	1
. . . know something about the history of the U.S., such as the Constitution, Bill of Rights, and the like?	61	31	7	1
. . . know something about the major nations of the world today, their kind of government, and their way of life?	42	46	10	2
. . . know something about the history of mankind, the great leaders in art, literature?	30	48	21	1
. . . know a foreign language?	16	32	50	2

*Less than 1%

The Importance of Extracurricular Activities

Gallup said:

> Those who believe in the importance of extracurricular activities in the schools will find support from the present survey. Approximately half of the parents with children now enrolled in school regard these activities as "very important." About four in 10 say they are "fairly important," and only one parent in eight says they are "not too important" or "not at all important."

The question and the findings:

I'd like your opinion about extracurricular activities such as the school band, dramatics, sports, the school paper. How important are these to a young person's education — very important, fairly important, not too important, or not at all important?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Very important	45	44	47	51
Fairly important	40	40	40	38
Not too important	9	9	10	9
Not at all important	4	4	2	2
Don't know/ no answer	2	3	1	*

*Less than 1%

Opportunities for Finding Part-Time Jobs

Gallup observed that in earlier generations young persons acquired work habits through part-time jobs that they could hold while attending school; in our current industrial-technological society most of these jobs are vanishing.

To discover how difficult it was for young people to find part-time jobs, and in what situations they were most likely to be found, this question was asked:

In your opinion, are the opportunities for young people to obtain part-time jobs in this community good, only fair, or poor?

The findings:

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Good	28	28	29	34
Only fair	39	39	39	36
Poor	25	23	27	24
Don't know/ no answer	8	10	5	6

Further breakdowns show that part-time jobs were considered difficult to find in all sections of the nation – in the large cities as well as the small communities. Blacks considered it particularly difficult to find part-time jobs for children in their communities, especially blacks who lived in the North. Demographic breakdowns:

	Good %	Only Fair %	Poor %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**28**	**39**	**25**	**8**
Race				
White	30	40	22	8
Nonwhite	14	33	47	6
Community size				
1 million and over	27	34	27	12
500,000 — 999,999	32	31	24	13
50,000 — 499,999	35	44	16	5
2,500 — 49,999	25	39	25	11
Under 2,500	23	41	32	4
Region				
East	24	37	30	9
Midwest	32	40	20	8
South	28	43	22	7
West	30	35	27	8
Race-region				
Northern white	30	38	23	9
Southern white	31	43	19	7
Northern black	11	30	54	5
Southern black	15	43	37	5

Course Credit for Community Service

Giving high school credit to juniors and seniors for community service – an idea already adopted in some schools – met with widespread approval in 1978. Eighty-seven percent of all respondents said they would like to have juniors and seniors earn course credit for giving service to the community. Those with children as well as those without children in school held this view.

The question and the findings:

A plan has been suggested to enable all juniors and seniors in high school to perform some kind of community service for course credit — such as working in a hospital or recreation center, beautifying parks, or helping law enforcement officers. Would you like to have such a plan adopted in this community, or not?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, would like plan	87	88	86	86
No, would not	8	7	11	10
Don't know/ no answer	5	5	3	4

What to Do with Closed Schools

Because declining school enrollments had forced the closing of many schools, public opinion was sought in 1978 on what to do with these buildings. The question:

Many schools are being closed today because of a drop in enrollment. What suggestions do you have as to how vacant school buildings might be used?

Suggestions for the use of vacant school buildings were varied and ranged in the following order, based on the number of mentions given each use:

1. Community activities
2. Adult education centers
3. Vocational and job training
4. Cultural centers (museums, libraries, concerts, exhibitions, theater)
5. Senior citizen centers
6. Youth activities
7. Make into offices
8. Use for governmental agencies
9. Sell or rent
10. Convert to apartments

Making Parents Responsible for Vandalism

School vandalism has been a serious problem for many schools throughout the nation. Students themselves are sometimes caught doing damage. Planners of the 1978 poll framed this question:

Should parents be made financially responsible, or not, for damage to school properly done by their children?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, they should be	86	85	88	93
No, they shouldn't	11	12	10	6
Don't know/ no answer	3	3	2	1

Separating Vocational Education from School

The proposal that vocational education be separated from the school and be conducted in a separate location by other agencies such as business or industry did not carry much appeal to parents with children attending school in 1978. Nor did it appeal particularly to those who have no children of school age.

The chief reason given by respondents for not approving this plan is that it takes children out of the school environment and deprives them of educational training in the basics. Those who favor the plan stress the importance of on-the-job training, that business has more know-how than vocational teachers, and that students would acquire a better understanding of what business and industry are all about. At the same time, there was much sentiment for combining the two kinds of education – with students spending part of the day in the classroom and part of the day in the real world of business and industry.

The questions and the findings:

In your opinion, should vocational education be separated from the school and conducted in a separate location by other agencies such as business or industry? Why do you say this?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, should separate	32	34	28	30
No, should not	53	48	62	60
Don't know/ no answer	15	18	10	10

Dealing with Absenteeism

Parents of children enrolled in public and nonpublic schools believed, by a majority, that students who are absent from school without good reason should be forced to attend. Moreover, by an even larger majority, they believed that parents should be held responsible for their children's school attendance.

Two questions were asked:

In some of our schools, absenteeism is as high as 40% on a given day. In your opinion, should those students who are frequently absent *without good reason* be dismissed from school, or should they be forced to attend?

Should or should not parents be held responsible for their children's school attendance?

What To Do with Students

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Should be dismissed	19	20	17	15
Should be forced to attend	63	62	65	78
No action should be taken	6	6	5	2
Don't know/ no answer	12	12	13	5

Should Parents Be Held Responsible?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Parents should be made responsible	86	85	89	92
Parents should not be	6	7	4	3
Don't know/ no answer	8	8	7	5

Confidence in School Boards

Citizens of the nation again gave their school boards a vote of confidence in 1978, as they had in 1969. Boards got their highest vote of confidence in the Midwest and South and in the smaller communities. The lowest vote was recorded in the cities with one million population or more. Northern blacks, of all groups, gave their school boards the lowest rating. And, as noted elsewhere, they also gave their schools the lowest rating. Southern blacks, on the other hand, gave their school boards a rating above the national average.

Parents of children enrolled in public schools gave boards a higher rating than did the general public.

The question and the findings:

Thinking about the school board in your school district, how much respect and confidence do you have in its ability to deal with school problems — a great deal of confidence, a fair amount, very little, or none?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Great deal of confidence	18	17	23	10
Fair amount	43	39	52	46
Very little	16	17	13	19
None	6	6	5	8
Don't know/ no answer	17	21	7	17

Influence of Groups on Local Education

In 1978 about one American adult in five believed there was a group of people in the local community that had more influence than it should in the way the schools were run. But the groups mentioned varied widely, and no group was named by more than a small minority.

Oddly enough, in the list of groups believed to have too much influence, the local school board was often named. This underscored a finding from another survey that many persons are wholly unaware of the function of local school boards, according to Gallup.

Politicians received some mentions, as did blacks and the NAACP, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers (PTA), and the "wealthy." But, on the whole, there was no group that, throughout the nation, was viewed as exercising too much influence.

The questions and the findings:

In your opinion, is there any group of people in this community that has more influence than it should have in the way the schools are run? (If yes) Who is that?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, too much influence	20	18	24	26
No	46	43	52	42
Don't know/ no answer	34	39	24	32

Financing the Public Schools

In 1978 the adoption of Proposition 13 in California and resistance throughout the nation to higher property taxes focused attention on the problem of how best to finance the public schools.

Questioned about how the public schools were financed, about half of the respondents (49%) named property or real

estate taxes, or said "local taxes." Surprisingly few were acquainted with other sources of revenue. As a matter of fact, for the nation as a whole in 1978, 48% of the revenues to finance the public schools came from local sources, 44% from the state, and 8% from the federal government. However, only one person in 9 (11%) of those included in the survey mentioned that money came from the federal government, and only one in six (16%) specifically mentioned state sources.

The following questions were asked:

There has been much discussion in the nation about the best way to finance the public schools. Do you happen to know where *most* of the money comes from to finance schools in this community? Where?

A second question dealing with school financing asked if the respondent was satisfied or dissatisfied with this way of raising money to support the public schools. The question:

Are you, yourself, satisfied or dissatisfied with this way of raising the money?

When the answers to this question were then related to the answers given to the previous questions about how the schools are financed, the results show:

	Satisfied %	Dissatisfied %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Those who named:			
Property taxes	43	52	5
Federal sources	68	21	11
State sources	68	20	12

A third question dealing with school financing was asked of those who said they were dissatisfied with the current means of financing the public schools:

What other way would you prefer?

Responses to this question indicated that many would prefer that state and federal sources be relied on to a greater extent. As a favored way to support the schools, they cited income taxes and sales taxes, or they simply said that money should come from the state and federal governments.

The public's wish to lower property taxes in favor of increased state taxes was reported in 1970 in this survey series and again in 1971 and 1972. In those years the survey question was worded as follows:

It has been suggested that state taxes be increased for everyone in order to let the state government pay a greater share of school expense and to reduce local property taxes. Would you favor an increase in state taxes so that real estate taxes could be lowered on local property?

	1970 %	1971 %	1972 %
For	54	46	55
Against	34	37	34
No opinion	12	17	11

Gallup made these observations:

> In the years since 1970 a smaller percentage of the funds to support the public schools has come from property taxes and a larger percentage has come from state and federal sources.
>
> One fact brought to light by the questions dealing with school financing could prove worrisome to educators in the future. When asked what other way they would prefer to finance schools, a surprisingly large number of persons volunteered the comment that people with children in the schools should pay a special tax and that the elderly and those without children in the schools should not have to pay any tax to support the public schools.
>
> Those who are interested in the continued welfare of the public schools should enlighten the public as to the need to support public school education in a democracy such as ours, should inform the public as to how the schools are presently supported, and, hopefully, work out an acceptable way to support the schools.

State and Federal Regulations

In 1978 the public was becoming aware of state and federal efforts to exert greater control over the educational programs of local schools. Big government was increasingly regarded by many citizens as an undesirable trend in national life. Ronald Reagan's political success depended heavily on exploiting this sentiment.

To discover the public's attitudes toward government regulation – state and federal – and how it might affect the local schools, this question was asked:

Some people worry that the state and the federal government are adopting many regulations regarding educational matters which don't take account of the local school situation. Do you think these actions by the state and the federal government are more likely to help, or more likely to hinder, public school education here?

While many people had not made up their minds on this question (28% nationally), those who had an opinion believed, by a 2 to 1 ratio, that state and federal regulations were more likely to hinder than to help.

When asked "Why do you say this?" those who said that state and federal regulations were likely to help pointed to the greater expertise of those in higher levels of government. They said that higher standards would be required, that local politics weren't involved, and that new and better programs would be introduced.

Those who said that state and federal regulations were likely to hinder the local schools pointed to specific programs of which a majority of local residents did not approve, such as busing, bilingual language instruction, avoidance of prayers, and school building construction requirements that are both costly and needless. But the reason advanced by most of those who were opposed was that state and federal regu-

lations ignored the vast differences in the problems of big-city schools and those in small towns, of rich suburban communities and those located in impoverished industrial areas, those with a high percentage of minorities and those with a small percentage.

Greater opposition to state and federal regulations was found among parents with children enrolled in nonpublic schools than among parents of children attending public schools.

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
State and federal regulations help	23	23	24	14
Hinder	44	43	46	54
Make no difference	5	5	5	5
Don't know/ no answer	28	29	25	27

This same series of questions had been asked twice before about federal and state control versus local control. On both occasions the findings showed the public strongly in favor of local control. A question asked in the 1976 survey revealed that two-thirds of those questioned want their local school boards to have greater responsibility in running the schools. In the 1977 survey a majority of aproximately the same size favored giving local school authorities jurisdiction over how money is to be spent in carrying out programs mandated by federal agencies.

Subjects Found Most Useful in Later Life

What can be learned from those who have finished high school and who have had the opportunity to make use of their school experience in later life? To discover how adults regarded the kind of education they received in high school, this question was asked:

What subjects that you studied or experiences that you gained in high school have you found to be most useful in later life?

These are the subjects, or experiences, found most useful, in order of mention:

1. English (literature, composition, grammar)
2. Mathematics (arithmetic, business math, etc.)
3. Commercial subjects (typing, bookkeeping, etc.)
4. Extracurricular activities (sports, drama, band, newspaper, etc.)
5. Shop (woodworking, drafting, machines, etc.)
6. History
7. Science
8. Foreign language
9. Psychology
10. Domestic science (sewing, cooking, etc.)

A second question asked:

And now thinking only of the subjects that were offered in your high school, are there any subjects you wish you had studied and didn't that would be of special help to you now?

The subject mentioned by far the most often was typing. The list follows, in order of mention:

1. Typing and other secretarial skills
2. Mathematics
3. Shop
4. Foreign languages
5. Science
6. English
7. History
8. Civics
9. Home economics
10. Music

Enjoyment of School

Do young people enjoy going to school? To shed some light on this question, parents with children enrolled in school were asked to give their impressions. The question:

Just how much or how little does your (eldest) child enjoy going to school — very much, somewhat, or very little?

In 1978 most parents said their children did enjoy going to school. There was little difference between those who attended public schools and those who attended private schools.

	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Enjoy very much	60	63
Somewhat	29	23
Very little	8	6
Don't know/no answer	3	8

Differences did appear when one-parent families were compared with two-parent families, with children in the one-parent families less likely to enjoy school. Mothers were more likely to say that their children did not enjoy school than were fathers. Those living in the East as well as those in large cities were also more likely to say that their children did not enjoy school.

Breakdowns by major demographic groups follow: (Percentages are based on the number of parents only.)

	Very Much %	Some-what %	Very Little %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**60**	**28**	**8**	**4**
Sex				
Men	68	24	3	5
Women	54	31	12	3
Race				
White	60	28	8	4
Nonwhite	61	28	9	2

	Very Much %	Some-what %	Very Little %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Age				
18 to 29 years	63	18	7	12
30 to 49 years	60	32	7	1
50 years and over	60	23	11	6
Community size				
1 million and over	51	32	13	4
500,000 — 999,999	58	31	6	5
50,000 — 499,999	59	31	7	3
2,500 — 49,999	63	30	4	3
Under 2,500	66	22	8	4
Education				
Grade school	61	27	10	2
High school	61	27	10	2
College	58	31	4	7
Region				
East	49	34	12	5
Midwest	63	24	7	6
South	64	26	7	3
West	67	29	4	—
By family				
One-parent families	51	26	11	12
Two-parent families	62	29	7	2

Time Spent with Schoolchildren

With so many mothers working outside the home, a question arises as to how much time parents have to devote to their children of school age. This question was asked in the 1978 poll:

As a parent, how much time do you usually have to devote to your youngster in the evening to assist him/her with his/her homework — enough time, not enough time, or none at all?

	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Have enough time	64	67
Not enough time	18	17
No time at all	14	5
Don't know/no answer	4	11

Parents with only a grade school education were more likely to say they did not have enough time. In fact, 48% of this group reported that they did not have enough time, or had none at all. Nonwhites reported that they had less time than whites

Major Problems Confronting the Public Schools in 1978

Identification of major problems for the local public schools in 1978 differed little from 1977. The question and the findings:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the *public* schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Lack of discipline	25	24	25	30
Use of dope/drugs	13	13	13	15
Lack of proper financial support	13	11	18	11
Integration/busing (combined)	13	14	11	22
Poor curriculum/ poor standards	12	12	10	18
Difficulty of getting good teachers	9	9	10	9
Large school/too many classes	5	5	5	5
Pupils' lack of interest	4	5	2	5
Crime/vandalism	4	5	3	5
Parents' lack of interest	4	4	5	4
Teachers' lack of interest	3	2	4	3
Mismanagement of funds/programs	3	3	2	2
Lack of proper facilities	2	2	2	1
Problems with administration	2	2	2	3
Communication problems	2	2	2	-
Drinking/alcoholism	2	1	3	-
School board policies	1	1	2	-
Too many schools/declining enrollment	1	1	2	-
Parents' involvement in school activities	1	1	1	1
Transportation	1	*	1	-
There are no problems	4	2	10	-
Miscellaneous	6	5	10	5
Don't know/ no answer	12	15	4	7

*Less than 1%
(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

1978 Ratings of the Public Schools

A slight drop in the public's rating of the public schools was registered in 1978. In the 1977 survey a total of 37% gave the public schools a rating of A or B. In the 1978 survey the figure was nearly the same — 36%, with the percentage giving the schools an A rating dropping from 11% to 9%. At the other extreme, 16% gave the schools D or Fail in 1977. In the 1978 survey the figure was 19%.

The question and the findings:

Students are often given the grades A,B,C,D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A,B,C,D, or FAIL?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents*
	%	%	%	%
A	9	7	15	4
B	27	24	36	19
C	30	29	32	30
D	11	11	10	11
FAIL	8	9	5	21
Don't know/ no answer	15	20	2	15

*Includes parents of students attending private and independent schools as well as parochial (nonpublic) schools.

Analysis of the findings by differert groups in the population, by areas, and by city size provides many insights into the way Americans perceive their public schools. Gallup made these comments in 1978:

> Parents who have children now attending the public schools hold their schools in much higher esteem than do others in the population. The lowest ratings are given by those who have children enrolled in nonpublic schools. The overall decline in ratings can be explained partly by the fact that there is a continuing decline in the number of U.S. families with children of school age.
>
> Major differences appear in the ratings when the attitudes of those who live in the larger cities (cities over 50,000) are compared with attitudes of those who live in cities with populations under 50,000. Attitudes are far more favorable in the smaller cities and towns than in the larger cities. In fact, residents of the central cities give their schools the lowest ratings in the nation: A and B ratings combined, 21%; D and Fail ratings combined, 30%. This compares with the highest ratings found (in cities 2,500 to 49,999) of 45% for A and B combined and 12% for D and Fail combined.
>
> Of all groups, blacks living in the North give their public schools the lowest rating. This group rates its schools 43% D or Fail and only 27% A or B.
>
> An interesting contrast is found when Northern blacks are compared with Southern blacks. Almost the opposite in ratings is found. Southern blacks give a top rating (A and B combined) of 35% to the public schools and an unfavorable rating (D and Fail combined) of only 14%.
>
> When the four main areas of the nation are compared, it is found that people living in the West – the area embracing the Rocky Mountain and Pacific states – are least satisfied with their schools.
>
> Younger persons – those 18 to 29 – tend to be slightly more critical than those in the next older age group, as well as more critical than the oldest age group (when only those with opinions are taken into account).

Breakdowns by major demographic groups follow:

	A	B	C	D	FAIL	Don't Know/ No Answer
	%	%	%	%	%	%
NATIONAL TOTALS	**9**	**27**	**30**	**11**	**8**	**15**
Sex						
Men	9	26	32	12	7	14
Women	10	27	28	10	10	15
Race						
White	10	27	30	10	8	15
Nonwhite	8	21	27	15	14	15
Age						
18 to 29 years	6	25	37	13	9	10
30 to 49 years	11	31	29	10	9	10
50 years and over	10	24	25	10	8	23
Community size						
1 million and over	8	22	22	14	18	16
500,000 — 999,999	5	22	38	15	2	18
50,000 — 499,999	6	25	38	10	9	12
2,500 — 49,999	13	32	30	8	4	13
Under 2,500	13	31	25	9	6	16
Central City	5	16	35	17	13	14
Education						
Grade school	14	18	25	7	9	27
High school	9	27	30	11	10	13
College	7	31	33	12	6	11
Region						
East	8	32	26	10	11	13
Midwest	10	28	29	10	6	17
South	13	26	30	9	7	15
West	5	17	37	17	10	14
Region/race						
Northern white	8	28	30	11	8	15
Southern white	14	26	30	8	8	14
Northern black	6	21	22	21	22	8
Southern black	11	24	28	10	4	23

Chapter 12
The Eleventh Annual Poll, 1979

Events of the Year in Education

The big education news of the year was the creation of the U.S. Department of Education. Such an agency, with a secretary reporting directly to the President, had been proposed for nearly a century. But for decades the idea served primarily as a subject for high school and college debates, although bills on the subject were introduced in the Congress session after session.

In 1979 a combination of factors brought results. They were 1) President Carter's promise to work for a federal education department, 2) the efforts of Democratic Senator Abraham Ribicoff, and 3) the continued campaign for the department by the National Education Association.

Under political pressure by the NEA, with the stewardship in Congress of Ribicoff and with the support of the White House, measures to create a Department of Education were introduced in the House and Senate. There was little problem in the Senate, because Ribicoff, a former Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, enjoyed credibility among his colleagues. But the House was a center of stubborn opposition. Representatives were lobbied by Catholic education groups, which feared a federal department would be unfriendly to parochial schools; by a Committee Against a Separate Department of Education, which included many who feared an expansion of federal controls on local public schools; and by the American Federation of Teachers, whose leader, Albert Shanker, argued that it was unwise to separate education from federal health and welfare services.

During House arguments on the measure, opponents sought to introduce "killer amendments" dealing with abortion, busing, prayer in the schools, and affirmative action. The strategies to booby-trap the legislation failed and the bill passed. Most legislators agreed with Ribicoff, who said, "This is a bill for structure and organization, not educational policy." Carter promptly signed the measure, saying, "This is the happy end of a longtime dream of mine." He named Shirley M. Hufstedler, a federal appeals judge from California, as the first Secretary of Education.

In the nation's schools, meanwhile, educators seeking to improve student achievement resorted to standardized testing in such massive ways that parents and civil rights groups launched a revolt against "the tyranny of testing." The two targets of the revolt were: 1) the nation's testing services and test publishers, which were accused of "monopolistic practices" and of promoting standardized tests that are "imprecise, open to misinterpretation and do not measure imagination, stamina, creativity, or human values – all needed for success and college"; and 2) educators who allegedly used test results to place minority students in classes for the educable mentally retarded.

As a consequence of attacks on testing, what was called the first "truth in testing" law in the nation was enacted by New York State. This required the testing services to open their examinations for public scrutiny by allowing students to see their graded tests and the correct answers. The law was hailed by consumer groups and denounced by the test-makers and test publishers.

In San Francisco a federal judge ruled that it was unconstitutional to use test results to place students in classes for the retarded. The ruling was applauded by minority groups. The case was fought on behalf of five black children who had been placed in classes for the retarded on the basis of scores on a variety of tests. Lawyers for the students contended the tests were developed on data from white populations and therefore discriminated against blacks and Hispanics. State education officials denied that the tests were racially biased and said they were good predictors of ability. The judge ruled in favor of the students.

School authorities seeking ways to control student violence and disruptive behavior rediscovered, modernized, and applied an ancient punitive measure. "Staying after school" became in-school suspension and was practiced so widely as to be labeled the rage of 1979.

The rationale behind in-school suspension was simple: Instead of suspending a disruptive student and sending him or her home, school authorities removed the student from regular classrooms but kept him in school and on learning tasks. Suspension or expulsion, educators reasoned, actually served to reward many students who wanted "out" and saw no punishment in missing classes.

In-school suspension functioned under a variety of school board policies and regulations. The measures ranged in duration from a few hours to several months. Some school systems made in-school suspension punitive and nothing more – complete isolation for study in a boiler room or warehouse space, with only books, tablets, and pencils for companionship. Other districts provided the in-school suspended student with bright classrooms, expert teachers, teacher aides, counseling services, and learning materials often more ample than those available in regular classrooms. The reasoning was that a student in trouble needs extra help and teacher support.

The practice carried a variety of labels: Isolated Classroom Environment (I.C.E.), Alternative Adjustment Lab, Guided Learning Center, Attitude Modification Class, Individualized Learning Area. Students used names of their own: the cooler, the school jail.

In-school suspension grew in popularity throughout the year because it provided school administrators with an answer to the public charge that schools were soft on discipline and at the same time met the objections of those who argued that sending a disruptive student home or to the street had little educational validity.

The year was an occasion for anniversaries of at least four major education developments:

1. *The G.I. Bill*, in its 35th year, was again hailed as "one of the truly great pieces of school legislation." Under its provisions, some 17.6 million veterans of three wars attended school, college, and job-training institutions. The expenditure of $48.3 billion in public money, said a congressional report, "was the best investment any society ever made on behalf of its youth."

2. *Brown* v. *Board of Education* was 25 years old. This U.S. Supreme Court decision against segregation brought about some measure of integration throughout the country. Southern states led with 46% of black children attending mixed schools. Even on this 25th anniversary, however, battles for integration continued in court rooms, state legislatures, school board rooms, and sometimes in the streets. Civil rights leaders accused the nation's big cities of "stubbornly holding to segregation patterns."

3. *Tinker* v. *Des Moines* was 10 years old. The case involved John Tinker and other students who, in protest against the Vietnam War, wore black armbands in school. They were suspended; they sued and won their case in the U.S. Supreme Court. In a memorable opinion, the Court said that students do not lose their right to free expression at the schoolhouse gate.

4. *"Sesame Street"* reached the ripe age of 10. This popular television program introduced young children to Big Bird, Cookie Monster, and cartoon characters flashing numbers and animated alphabets. Over the years, "Sesame Street" received high marks from parents and grandparents – and grants from the U.S. Office of Education.

Poll Findings

In only one feature, the eleventh poll differed notably from earlier surveys. George Gallup Sr. drew from answers to questions included in this *and* earlier polls to construct what he called "the public's conception of the ideal school." His description of this ideal school (which appeared at the end of his report) follows:

The Ideal School

The surveys in this 11-year series have included many questions dealing with the public's ideas about the ideal school. In the present survey, three questions have a bearing upon this: how schools can best obtain an A rating from the public; what parents like most and least about the school their child attends; and, finally, whether parents would like to send their child to a different public school and why.

The results of these questions and of those included in earlier surveys make it possible to construct the public's idea of the ideal school.

Schools reflect the needs and goals of society, and as these change so do the public's views. Presently the public's concept of the ideal school can be described by requirements that they regard as most essential, as follows:

1. Teachers should be well qualified and should be required to pass state board examinations before they are hired as well as at regular intervals thereafter. In their teaching role they should take a personal interest in the progress of each one of their students, interest their pupils in the subjects they teach, and motivate them to progress at an acceptable rate.

2. Discipline should be strict. Specific rules of behavior should be agreed upon by the school and by parents and then should be rigorously applied.

3. The curriculum should emphasize the basics, particularly mathematics, English grammar and composition, civics/government, U.S. history, science, and geography. In addition, the curriculum should offer vocational training for students who do not plan to go on to college.

4. Students should be given more work to do in school and after school.

5. Better communication should be established with parents and the community through greater use of local media – newspapers, radio, television – and through school newsletters and publications. More conferences should be held between teachers and parents regarding the progress of students.

6. Courses or seminars should be organized for parents to help them help their children in school. Among the many topics that parents would like most to discuss are these: what to do about drugs, smoking, alcohol use; how to develop good work habits; how to encourage reading; how to increase interest in school and school subjects; how to help the child organize homework; how to improve the child's school behavior; how to deal with the child's emotional problems.

7. The ideal school would give much more attention to the selection of careers than is presently the case. Days should be set aside each year to review career opportunities, perhaps with local professional and business people taking part. School guidance counselors should give more help in selecting careers.

8. Schools should try to interest a majority of the residents of the school district in attending, at least once a year, a lecture, meeting, or social occasion held in the school building. Schools should ask for community volunteers to help with school affairs and operations. And, finally, schools should see that alumni retain their interest in the school.

How to Improve the Public's Respect for the Public Schools

After respondents in the eleventh survey had rated the public schools in their community, they were asked:

In your opinion, what are the main things a school has to do before it can earn an A?

There was general agreement on the seven steps listed below, in order of mention:

1. Improve the quality of teachers (23%).
2. Increase discipline (20%).
3. Set higher standards (17%).
4. Give students more individual attention (16%).
5. Put more emphasis on the basics – the three R's (12%).
6. Provide better management and direction of schools (7%).
7. Establish closer relations with parents (6%).

Among other suggestions mentioned were: update the curriculum, have smaller classes, eliminate drugs and alcohol, teach more life skills, and upgrade school facilities.

Other Ways to Improve Respect for the Public Schools

Reports of the findings in this series of surveys frequently point out that persons who are most familiar with the public schools – parents whose children were enrolled in these schools – hold the public schools in greater esteem than those persons less familiar with them. Further evidence that greater involvement and familiarity with the public schools result in a more favorable attitude was found in the ratings given the schools by persons who had attended a recent lecture, meeting, or social occasion in any local school building.

	National Totals	Those Who Have Attended School Affair
	%	%
A rating	8	11
B rating	26	41
C rating	30	35
D rating	11	7
FAIL	7	4
Don't know/no answer	18	2

Despite much discussion in education circles regarding greater citizen involvement in the public schools, and greater use by citizens of public school buildings, survey evidence indicated that little progress had been made. When a question from the 1969 survey was repeated in the eleventh survey, the results indicated that no greater number of adults were attending lectures, meetings, or social occasions in the local schools than in past years.

This is the question asked in 1969 and repeated in the eleventh survey:

Have you attended any lecture, any meeting, or any social occasion in any local school building during the last year?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, have attended	33	19	65	46
No	64	77	34	52
Can't recall	3	4	1	2

What Do You Like Best About Your Child's School?

Parents with children enrolled in public school or in parochial/independent school were asked this question about the school their eldest child was attending:

What do you like most about the school your child attends?

Responses fell into the following categories, listed in order of frequency:

1. *Good teachers.* They take a personal interest in the child and give him/her individual attention.
2. *High standards.* The school does a good job of teaching the basics, has a high scholastic rating, keeps students busy, and gives them lots of homework.
3. *Special programs.* The school offers a wide variety of programs for the gifted, the learning disabled, the college oriented, and those interested in shop courses or vocational training.
4. *Discipline.* The school does not permit children to "fool around." Students attend strictly to their work, and teachers command and receive respect.

Among the other reasons given for liking the school their eldest child attends were these: small classes, proximity to home, good communication between school and home, and good principal.

What Do You Like Least About Your Child's School?

About the same picture was found when parents were asked what they liked least about the school their eldest child attended, except that discipline assumed first place in mentions, and external factors such as distance from home, the condition of the school building, and the like were also mentioned.

The question:

And what do you like least about it?

Here, in order of mention, are the things parents disliked:

1. *Lack of discipline.* Teachers and school administrators have little control over students. Lack of security in school.
2. *Low standards.* Not enough emphasis is placed upon the basics. Students do not have enough work to do.
3. *Teachers.* They are not interested in the students, fail to motivate them, are not innovative.
4. *Condition of school building.* It is old and rundown; classrooms are dingy.
5. *Overcrowding.* Too many students in classes.
6. *Too far from home; children bused.*
7. *Vandalism; use of marijuana, alcohol, and drugs by students.*

Would You Like Another Public School Better?

Parents with children enrolled in a public school were asked if they would like to send their child to a different public school and, if so, why.

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Approximately one parent in eight (12%) said he/she would prefer another public school to the one the eldest child was attending. When the age of the eldest child was considered, almost exactly the same response came from those whose eldest child was age 12 or younger as in the case of those age 13 and older.

Would you like to send your child to a different public school?

	Yes %	No %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Parents whose eldest child is 12 years & under	12	78	10
Parents whose eldest child is 13 years & over	11	86	3

When parents were asked to give their reasons for preferring another public school, about half said, "For a better education." Other reasons mentioned include dissatisfaction with facilities, dissatisfaction with the administration of the school, preference for a school closer to home, and the desire to have their child attend a smaller school.

Major Problems

By 1979 certain trends of opinion with regard to "major problems" were becoming clear. While "discipline" was again the problem most often mentioned, significantly fewer respondents mentioned the issues of integration/busing and fewer people were complaining of inadequate school facilities. On the other hand, a significant increase had occurred in the number who cited the curriculum and low standards as major problems. And in 1979, for the first time, a sufficient number of those interviewed cited "government interference" and "teacher strikes" to place them on the list of problems.

The question and the findings:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the *public* schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents* %
Lack of discipline	24	24	26	32
Use of dope/drugs	13	13	14	7
Lack of proper financial support	12	12	12	4
Poor curriculum/ poor standards	11	10	11	17
Difficulty in getting good teachers	10	9	12	12
Integration/busing (combined)	9	9	7	15
Crime/vandalism	4	4	3	1
Large school/too many classes/ overcrowding	4	4	6	6
Pupils' lack of interest/truancy	4	3	4	4
Parents' lack of interest	3	3	4	3
Teachers' lack of interest	3	2	4	1
Drinking/alcoholism	2	2	3	1
Mismanagement of funds/programs	2	2	2	2
School board policies	2	1	2	—
Communication problems	2	2	2	2
Government interference	2	1	1	6
Lack of proper facilities	2	2	2	—
Transportation	1	1	2	1
Parents' involvement in school activities	1	1	1	2
Teachers' strikes	1	1	1	3
Too many schools/ declining enrollment	1	1	1	1
Problems with administration	1	1	2	1
There are no problems	3	1	8	2
Miscellaneous	5	5	7	5
Don't know/ no answer	16	20	7	5

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)
*Includes parents of students attending private and independent schools as well as parochial (nonpublic) schools.

1979 Ratings of the Public Schools

After taking sampling and statistical factors into account, Gallup concluded that there was no significant change in ratings of the public schools from 1978 to 1979. Moreover, he speculated that the downward trends recorded since 1974 may have come to an end. Gallup was right for the short term. Not until 1983 was there a significant drop in the ratings, and after that they were higher than at any time since 1974, when this measure was established (see Chapter 1).

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

Parents with children attending nonpublic (independent/parochial) schools continued to give the public schools the lowest ratings. The highest ratings came from parents of children attending the public schools, as the following table shows:

Rating	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
A	8	7	12	7
B	26	22	37	14
C	30	28	31	40
D	11	11	10	21
FAIL	7	7	7	9
Don't know/ no answer	18	25	3	9

Analysis of the data by other groups in the adult population suggested the following conclusions, based on this and previous studies:

- The public schools are held in lowest esteem by blacks living in the central cities of the North.
- Younger adults are more critical of the schools than their elders.
- Better-educated citizens give the schools lower ratings than the more poorly educated.
- Public schools are held in highest esteem by residents of small towns and rural communities.
- Southern blacks rate their public schools higher than Northern blacks.
- Persons living in the West give their public schools a lower rating than persons living in other major areas of the nation.

Further breakdowns:

	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**8**	**26**	**30**	**11**	**7**	**18**
Sex						
Men	8	25	29	11	7	20
Women	8	27	29	12	7	17
Race						
White	9	26	30	11	6	18
Nonwhite	6	22	24	12	16	20
Age						
18 to 29 years	5	21	36	15	5	18
30 to 49 years	8	28	32	12	11	9
50 years and over	11	28	22	7	5	27
Community size						
1 million and over	9	20	21	14	12	24
500,000 — 999,999	13	21	29	12	5	20
50,000 — 499,999	5	23	34	13	7	18
2,500 — 49,999	10	29	30	10	4	17
Under 2,500	8	33	32	8	5	14
Central City	6	14	31	15	13	21
Education						
Grade school	13	24	18	6	7	32
High school	7	26	31	12	8	16
College	8	27	32	13	5	15
Region						
East	10	25	29	10	7	19
Midwest	8	31	31	11	4	15
South	7	26	29	9	8	21
West	7	20	28	18	10	17
Region/Race						
Northern white	9	27	29	12	6	17
Southern white	8	25	32	8	6	21
Northern black	7	16	30	15	13	19
Southern black	5	30	17	10	17	21

Best Source of Information About the Local Schools

The local newspaper was still the best single source of information about the local schools in 1979. The other major media – television and radio – had improved their coverage of school news since this topic was first explored in 1969, but the local newspaper still had a large advantage.

Information about the schools comes from many sources besides the media, such as children now in school, neighbors, school meetings, school personnel, and one's own personal involvement in school activities. As information sources, these are fully as important as the news media.

This open question was asked in both 1969 and 1979:

What is your best source of information about the local public schools?

	Information Sources	
	1979 National Totals %	1969 National Totals %
Local newspaper	37	38
Radio & TV	21	16
School publications/ newsletters	7	8
Word of mouth/personal involvement, etc.	70	60
Don't know/no answer	8	6

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

Cost Per Child Per School Year

Gallup said:

> As the costs of education continue to increase, chiefly because of inflation, the cost per child per school year may become the unit for comparing one school with another.

To discover how many citizens thought in these terms, the following questions were asked:

Do you happen to know what it costs per child, per school year, in the local public schools? How much?

Only one person in eight (12%) claimed to know the cost. When members of this group were asked to name a figure, they gave an amount that was substantially less than the estimated figure for the nation.

Tax Foundation researchers estimated that the cost per child for the year ending June 1977 was $1,782. Allowing for a 9.5% yearly increase, which was the average increase since 1966, the national figure at the time of the 1979 survey was approximatley $2,100.

The median figure arrived at by those who said they knew the cost was $1,200 – an amount substantially less than the national estimate.

Below are the figures cited:

Under $700	17%
$700-$1,299	40
$1,300-$1,899	18
$1,900-$2,499	10
$2,500 & over	15
	100%

Is Education Better or Worse Than in Your Day?

This question was asked in both 1973 and 1979: As you look on your own elementary and high school education, is it your impression that children today get a better – or worse – education than you did?

The view of the 1973 minority – that education of the prior generation was worse – had become the view of the majority by 1979, though barely. The greatest change in this period occurred in the Western states, where in 1973, 54% said that the schools of the past were better, and 25% said they were worse; in 1979, 51% said they were worse than in the past and 27% said they were better. Better-educated respondents, those who had attended college, also changed their view. In 1979 they said schools were "worse" in the past by a 46% to 36% margin. They had held the opposite view in 1973.

On the other hand, blacks and respondents with little education, as well as those who lived in small towns and rural areas, held the view in 1979 that education was currently better than in their own time.

Reassuringly, parents with children attending school said that today's education was better. The margin was fairly substantial: 53% to 39%.

The question and the findings:

As you look on your own elementary and high school education, is it your impression that children today get a better — or worse — education than you did?

	Education Today Compared with Earlier Times			
	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Schools better today	41	36	53	36
Worse	42	43	39	54
No difference	9	11	6	6
Don't know/ no answer	8	10	2	4

Further breakdowns:

	Better	Worse	No Difference	Don't Know/ No Answer
	%	%	%	%
NATIONAL TOTALS	**41**	**42**	**9**	**8**
Sex				
Men	36	45	10	9
Women	45	40	8	7
Race				
White	39	43	10	8
Nonwhite	49	37	6	8
Age				
18 to 29 years	38	40	14	8
30 to 49 years	41	47	7	5
50 years and over	42	40	8	10
Community size				
500,000 and over	36	43	10	11
50,000 — 499,999	36	48	8	8
2,500 — 49,999	47	36	11	6
Under 2,500	47	39	10	4
Education				
Grade school	51	34	5	10
High school	40	43	10	7
College	36	46	9	9
Region				
East	40	40	11	9
Midwest	43	41	9	7
South	47	40	7	6
West	27	51	13	9

A Cap on School Budgets

Despite the prevailing sentiment in the nation that local taxes were too high, nearly half of the 1979 respondents disapproved of putting a top limit on the amount of money included in the annual budgets of the public schools. Nationally, the vote was approximately 4 to 3 against such a limit. As the following table shows, only parents whose children attended nonpublic schools approved of a cap; but even for this group the vote was fairly close.

The question and the findings:

Would you approve or disapprove of a law in this state that would put a top limit on the amount of money which could be included in the local public schools' annual budget?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Approve limit	33	35	28	44
Disapprove limit	42	38	54	40
Already have such a law	4	3	5	2
Don't know/ no answer	21	24	13	14

Respondents who approved or disapproved were then asked why they felt this way. Those who approved of a law placing a limit on local school budgets gave these reasons in order of frequency: 1) there is too much waste; 2) a limit is necessary or there will be no end to increases in spending; and 3) taxes are already too high.

Those who disapproved of such a law gave these reasons in order of mention: 1) quality should be the main concern, not cost; 2) flexibility in budgeting is needed in a time of inflation; and 3) schools differ widely in their financial requirements depending on local factors.

Money for Men's vs. Women's Sports

In the late Seventies, many colleges and universities complained that if the federal government required them to spend as much money on women's sports as on men's sports, they would lose many thousands of dollars on sports events at the box office. In the case of high school sports, relatively few harbored such a fear. A substantial majority of survey respon-

dents believed that the same amount of money should be spent to support girls' athletics as boys'. In fact, there was little difference in the views of the various groups, as evidenced by the table below.

The question and the findings:

The federal government may require all high schools to spend the same amount of money on women's sports as on men's sports. Do you approve or disapprove of this plan?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Approve	61	62	61	55
Disapprove	29	27	32	35
Don't know/ no answer	10	11	7	10

State Board Examinations

Widespread approval was found for state board examinations for teachers. Such tests would be in addition to meeting college requirements for a teacher's certificate. In short, teachers would be required to meet the same kind of criteria as doctors, lawyers, and dentists.

The question and the findings:

In addition to meeting college requirements for a teacher's certificate, should those who want to become teachers also be required to pass a state board examination to prove their knowledge in the subject(s) they will teach before they are hired?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, they should	85	84	87	84
No	9	10	9	7
Don't know/ no answer	6	6	4	9

A second question dealing with state board examinations sought to find out if teachers should be tested every few years to see if they were keeping up-to-date with developments in their field. Here again, public sentiment overwhelmingly favored such a requirement.

The question and the findings:

After they are hired, do you think teachers should be tested every few years to see if they are keeping up-to-date with developments in their fields?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, they should	85	85	85	86
No	10	10	12	5
Don't know/ no answer	5	5	3	9

Not only should teachers be tested every few years but, in the public's opinion, administrators also should be required to meet the same test.

The next question and the findings:

Should school administrators be tested every few years to see if they are keeping up-to-date?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, they should	85	85	84	80
No	10	10	13	10
Don't know/ no answer	5	5	3	10

Dealing with the Handicapped

The public favored putting *mentally* handicapped children in special classes of their own, according to the 1979 survey. At the same time, people approved of putting *physically* handicapped children in the same classrooms with other students.

Those who should be most concerned were parents of children enrolled in either public or parochial/independent schools; they voted overwhelmingly for putting mentally handicapped children in special classes and approved placing physically handicapped children in the same classrooms with their own children.

The first question and the findings:

In your opinion, should mentally handicapped children be put in the same classrooms with other students or should they be put in special classes of their own?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Put with other students	13	13	16	10
Put in special classes	77	77	76	77
Don't know/ no answer	10	10	8	13

The second question and the findings:

Should physically handicapped children be put in the same classrooms with other students or should they be put in special classes of their own?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Put with other students	53	51	60	54
Put in special classes	36	38	32	35
Don't know/ no answer	11	11	8	11

National Youth Service

Gallup said:

> A national youth service program has been supported by the American public for many years. Legislators have feared

that voting for such a plan would cost them some votes and have failed thus far to pass such legislation, even though a national service program has worked well in other nations. In addition to removing young persons from the ranks of the unemployed, such a plan would probably provide enough qualified recruits to meet present military requirements without reinstituting the draft.

The plan suggested in the present survey would require any young person under the age of 20 who is unemployed and not attending school or college to choose among three alternatives: 1) take vocational or on-the-job training, 2) perform public service, or 3) perform military service.

The questions and the findings:

As you may know, the United State has a youth unemployment problem. It has been suggested that we develop a national youth service which would *require* every young man under the age of 20 who is unemployed, and not attending school or college, to take vocational or on-the-job training, or to perform public or military service until he reaches the age of 20. Would you approve or disapprove of such a national youth service plan for young men? Would you approve or disapprove of such a national youth service plan for young women?

National Youth Service for Young Men

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Approve national service program	67	68	65	66
Disapprove	27	24	31	30
Don't know/ no answer	6	8	4	4

National Youth Service for Young Women

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Approve national service program	62	62	60	58
Disapprove	31	29	35	39
Don't know/ no answer	7	9	5	3

Approval of this program for both young men and young women who are unemployed and not attending school or college was found among all major segments of the population.

Essential Subjects

Each generation has a different view of the importance of particular subjects included in the public school curriculum. To determine which were regarded as most essential in 1979, survey respondents were asked about 11 subjects. They judged each as "essential" for all students or "not too essential."

The question:

Public schools can teach many different things. Will you tell me in the case of each of these high school subjects, whether you regard it as essential for all students, or not too essential?

Below are the results, with subjects ranked according to the percentage saying it is "essential."

	National Totals		
	Essential %	Not Too Essential %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Mathematics	97	1	2
English grammar & composition	94	3	3
Civics/government	88	8	4
U.S. history	86	11	3
Science	83	14	3
Geography	81	16	3
Physical education	76	21	3
Interdependence of nations —foreign relations	60	32	8
Music	44	52	4
Foreign language	43	53	4
Art	37	58	5

The opinions of respondents with children attending school agreed almost exactly with the opinions of those who had no children in school. Mathematics and English topped the list for both groups, and the order in which other subjects were regarded as essential was the same.

Gallup said:

> It should be pointed out that the question asked about *all* students. Art, music, and foreign language are still very important for many young people.
>
> Because of the new emphasis on global education and the growing conviction that the nations of the world are interdependent, this subject was included in the list. Interestingly, it was regarded as essential by 60% of those included in the survey.
>
> The public attaches much greater importance to geography as a subject than is currently accorded to it in many school systems. Tests of knowledge in geography show an amazing lack of information in this field on the part of students throughout the nation.

Fewer Courses or Many

In 1979 the public, by a small majority, preferred that public high schools concentrate on fewer subjects rather than offer students a wide variety of courses.

Remember that the back-to-basics movement was widely favored, especially by those familiar with declining scores on standardized tests. On the other hand, offering a wide variety of courses was seen by some as a way to interest students who otherwise might become dropouts.

The question and the findings:

Public high schools can offer students a wide variety of courses, or they can concentrate on fewer basic courses such as English, mathematics, history, and science. Which of these two policies do you think the local high school(s) should follow in planning their curriculum — a wide variety of courses or fewer but more basic courses?

Fewer Courses vs. a Wide Variety

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Wide variety	44	44	44	43
Fewer courses	49	47	53	53
Don't know/ no answer	7	9	3	4

Substantial differences were found on this question when the results were examined by age, by education, and by section of the country. Young adults, those in the age group 18 to 29, voted for a wide variety of courses – almost the opposite of individuals over 50.

College-educated respondents also favored a wide variety of courses over concentration on a few. Persons living in the Western states preferred fewer but more basic courses over a wide variety, whereas people living in the Eastern states were evenly divided.

Further breakdowns:

	Wide Variety %	Fewer Courses %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**44**	**49**	**7**
Sex			
Men	40	52	8
Women	47	46	7
Race			
White	43	50	7
Nonwhite	52	40	8
Age			
18 to 29 years	57	39	4
30 to 49 years	44	52	4
50 years and over	33	55	12
Community size			
1 million and over	48	44	8
500,000 — 999,999	47	46	7
50,000 — 499,999	43	51	6
2,500 — 49,999	43	49	8
Under 2,500	40	52	8
Education			
Grade school	32	54	14
High school	43	50	7
College	51	44	5
Region			
East	47	47	6
Midwest	43	48	9
South	45	48	7
West	36	55	9

Suggestions for Improving Community Relations

Gallup said:

> It is generally agreed that education in the local public schools can be achieved best when parents, the community, and the schools all work together. The question arises as to how to get these three groups to work together in the best interests of the schools.

To see what thoughts the public, including parents, had to offer, the following open question was used:

What suggestions would you make to get parents, the community, and the school to work together to improve education in the local public schools?

Survey respondents had many suggestions, which Gallup summarized as follows:

1. *Better communication.* The local community cannot be expected to take a keen interest in the schools if people know little about them. The media should carry much more school news, especially news about the achievements of students and the schools, the means being taken to deal with school problems, and new developments in education. Media research has shown that there is far greater interest in schools and in education than most journalists think. At the same time, the schools should not rely solely on the major media. Newsletters are important to convey information that the media cannot be expected to report.

2. *More conferences.* Many of those included in the survey recommend that more conferences about the progress and problems of students be held with parents – both father and mother. Special monthly parent meetings and workshops are also suggested as a way to bring teachers, administrators, and parents together. Survey respondents also recommend courses for parents and special lectures. PTA meetings, some suggest, could be more useful to parents if school problems and educational developments were given more attention.

3. *Invite volunteers.* Some respondents suggest that, if more members of the community could serve in a volunteer capacity in the classrooms and elsewhere in the school, they would further better community understanding of the problems faced by the schools. In addition, their involvement in school operations would increase their own interest in educational improvement at the local level.

4. *Plan special occasions.* Interest in the schools and in education could be improved, some suggested, by inviting members of the community – both those who have children in the schools and those who do not – to attend meetings, lectures, and social events in the school buildings. As noted in another section of this survey report, only one person in three across the nation attended a lecture, meeting, or social occasion in a school building during the last year. In 1969, when the same question was asked, a slightly higher proportion said they had attended a lecture, meeting, or social occasion in a school building.

Private schools, and virtually all colleges and universities, plan many occasions to bring their alumni back to their cam-

puses in order to keep them interested in the school. The public schools could adopt the same policy to their advantage, inviting not only alumni to attend such events but members of the community who have attended schools in other areas.

The Amount of Schoolwork Required

Parents of children enrolled in school were asked to judge whether students were being given less work than they were given 20 years before and, if so, why they thought this the case. Both those who had children in the public schools and parents of parochial/independent school students said they agreed with an educator who claimed that schoolchildren were being given about one-third less work to do.

The question and the findings:

An educator claims that children are not achieving as well in school today as they did 20 years ago because they are given about one-third less work to do in school and after school. Do you think children are assigned less work today? (If yes) Why is this so?

Parents	Public School Parents %	Parochial School %
Yes, less work today	51	59
No	38	22
Don't know/no answer	11	19

The reasons offered to explain why less work was being assigned students fell into six main categories, listed here in the order of frequency. Some typical comments are included.

1. *Teachers are lazy.* "They are too lazy to go over written homework."
2. *Teachers are not interested.* "Teachers aren't as interested in the progress of students as they were in my time."
3. *A new philosophy.* "We are living in a permissive society. Don't do anything if you don't want to."
4. *Easy courses.* "Many students pick easy courses, like art, so that they won't have to do homework."
5. *Extracurricular activities.* "Students are so busy with school activities that they have no time for their studies."
6. *Better methods.* "Children cover more ground and learn more during regular class periods."

Absenteeism

Absenteeism was a growing problem in many schools in the late Seventies. One aspect of this problem was the awareness of parents of their children's absence from school.

In the 1979 survey, parents of children enrolled in school were questioned about the number of days they thought their children had been absent (from the beginning of school in September until the time of the survey in early May); whether their children could be absent without their knowing it; and, finally, if the school promptly notifies them about each absence. In the case of each question, the respondent was asked about the eldest child in school.

The first question:

About how many days has your child (the eldest now in school) been absent since school opened last September?

Days Absent	All Parents %
0 - 5 days	56
6 - 10 days	21
11 - 15 days	9
16 - 20 days	3
21 days & over	4
Don't know/no answer	7

The second question:

Do you think it is possible for your child to be absent without your knowledge?

	Yes %	No %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Parents whose eldest child is 12 years & under	15	84	1
Parents whose eldest child is 13 years & over	47	53	—

The third question:

Does the school let you know promptly about each absence?

	Yes %	No %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Parents whose eldest child is 12 years & under	50	37	13
Parents whose eldest child is 13 years & older	57	36	7

Career Guidance

An open question in the 1979 survey sought to determine what help, if any, schools were giving students in choosing careers.

Parents whose eldest child in school was 14 years of age or older were asked the following question:

What help, if any, has the school given your child in choosing a career?

The responses indicate that, at least from the parents' viewpoint, rather little guidance was being offered in the matter of careers. Guidance, the respondents said, mostly concerned recommended subjects, help with personal problems, and, in the case of older students, scholarships and advice about choosing colleges and universities. In some instances, parents added, career guidance was not offered until the junior or senior year of high school.

Counselors were warmly praised for their help, but most of those questioned said that their child had received no career guidance. In fact, only one person in five specifically mentioned that his or her child was given help in selecting a career.

Student Reports: Could They Be More Helpful?

Parents of children enrolled in the public schools and parents of children attending parochial/independent schools were asked the following question about their eldest child in school:

Do the reports you receive on the progress of your child (eldest) in school provide you with the information you would like to have, or should the reports contain additional information that would be helpful?

	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Satisfied with present reports	62	67
Dissatisfied	32	13
Don't know/no answer	6	20

Some differences were found between those who had younger children and those with older children in respect to their satisfaction with the reports they received.

	Parents with Children	
	12 Years & Under %	13 Years & Over %
Satisfied with present reports	73	64
Dissatisfied	25	35
Don't know/no answer	2	1

All respondents who said they were dissatisfied with current reports were asked what kind of information they would like to have included that they were not receiving. Below, in order of mention, are their suggestions:

1. More detailed information – not just grades – regarding the student's weaknesses, abilities, problems; why he/she is doing poorly; and where the student stands in the class.
2. Information about the student's relations with others, both teachers and students.
3. What can be done at home to help the student.
4. More detailed information about the student's behavior in and out of the classroom, including such things as smoking, use of drugs, etc.
5. Some parents mentioned that they would like more frequent reports and immediate notification when their child was doing poorly or failing.

Chapter 13
The Twelfth Annual Poll, 1980

Events of the Year in Education

Religionists and creationists knocked on the school door and in many instances gained admittance. The year's educational events were dominated by battles between those who wanted "to bring God and the Bible" into the public classrooms of the nation and those who fought the attempts.

The battles flared in 1980 largely because of the election of Ronald Reagan as President of the United States. As far back as 1969, Reagan encouraged the California State Board of Education to approve the notion that the biblical account of creation should be taught in the public schools. He was governor of California at that time and was enjoying popularity among voters. When, in 1980, he campaigned for the presidency on the Republican ticket, he again brought the issue to the fore by saying that "evolution is a theory about which many scientists have many questions," and that the biblical account of creation "should have equal time along with Darwin's theory of evolution."

Energized by such statements, creationists succeeded in persuading boards of education in scattered communities (in California, Texas, Georgia, and New York) to buy text materials that tell how it was "In the Beginning." Legislation demanding creationist teachings was introduced in at least 11 states by 1980. Creationists also put pressure on state textbook selection committees to see to it that new instructional materials gave attention to the way God created heaven and earth and man in seven days.

The presidential campaign also brought to the foreground the Moral Majority, pledged to support national and state legislation permitting prayer in public schools. Prayer could be voluntary, but it had to be Christian, since only that brand of prayer was acceptable to God, the Moral Majority maintained. This alarmed established church councils, Jews, and the American Civil Liberties Union. All prepared for battle in local communities, state legislatures, and the Congress.

The issue in Congress was whether Republicans, who were now in control of the Senate, would succeed in enacting a constitutional amendment authorizing public school prayer. Majority Leader Howard Baker Jr. (R-Tenn.) said he and his colleagues would have no trouble passing such legislation, "and with the House concurring," it would go to the states for ratification. Opponents of the proposed amendment geared up for more battles.

A venerable idea in education, going back to Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841), caught fire in 1980. Its modern name: mastery learning.

The idea was given a boost by publication during the year of Benjamin Bloom's *All Our Children Learning*. As Bloom explained it, mastery learning is based on the following precepts:

1. Given enough time, all students can master the subject matter offered in the schools.

2. Some students need more time, others less. Some students need more concrete illustration and explanation than others, and some need more repetition and drill than others.

3. Teachers must follow seven steps (closely related to Herbart's prescription), which include motivation, presentation of a rationale ("Why are we learning this?"), setting objectives for the lesson, presentation of the material (facts, ideas, concepts), teacher statements of what will be expected of the student, group practice, and individual practice.

4. Testing is used to see if students have mastered the lesson. Those who have done so go on to advance units of learning. Those who have not go to remedial or additional practice.

It is all too pat, too cut and dried, too formal, said critics, adding that the procedure had been discarded by modern educators as far back as the 1930s. But it works, answered supporters of mastery learning. It raises student scores. It breeds success and breaks the failure cycle for many students. Testifying to the success of mastery learning were the school systems of Johnson City (N.Y.), Chicago, and Denver, whose 89 elementary schools "are shot through with mastery learning techniques." Close to 10,000 classrooms in districts of every size were either trying out the techniques or already were fully committed to them. And the techniques were discussed with enthusiasm at conventions of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and the American Educational Research Association, to name but two meetings of national professional associations.

During the year, the refugee child became a major concern to many of America's public schools. The schools absorbed waves of immigrant children and struggled to provide them with educational services.

The children were called refugees, entrants, boat people, aliens, children of freedom flotillas. They came from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Cuba, Haiti, the U.S.S.R., Mexico, Central America, and from trouble spots in Africa. Their parents were fleeing from political oppression, poverty, or jail terms. The children's first contact with American life was the school. They applied in large numbers to the public schools in Florida, California, Texas, Colorado, Louisiana, Iowa, Wisconsin, and New York. They came with severe problems: no knowledge of English, malnutrition, backgrounds of violence and poverty, traumas of life in their homelands, misconceptions of democracy.

To help local and state school systems, Congress passed the Refugee Education Assistance Act of 1980 and provided some $46 million for the year. Educators complained that the funds were "woefully inadequate." Further, they pointed out that the child refugee problem would become more severe. Some 170,000 new refugee children of school age were expected to seek enrollment, swelling the total to more than 300,000 by 1982.

An event of such crucial importance took place in 1980 that many in Washington predicted it would affect the course of education for years. Ronald Reagan captured the White House and sent transition teams to the nation's capital to plan "getting the government off the backs of educators." National education associations and others who had worked for the re-election of Jimmy Carter for a second term, including the National Education Association, were "stunned and prepared for the worst," in the words of NEA publicists.

The transition teams sent in by the victorious Republicans gave a hint of what was to come. Members of the teams spoke of

- Eliminating the U.S. Department of Education.
- Halting forced busing of school children.
- Promoting prayer in the public schools.
- Introducing tax tuition credits.
- Enacting the use of vouchers.
- "Replacing the crazyquilt of wasteful educational programs with block grants."
- "Restoring decision-making about public schools to parents and voters."
- "Enacting no new federal education programs."
- "Trimming to the bone federal reporting requirements so as to release teachers and administrators to do their job – educating students."

Reagan had been elected on a platform containing the above-listed planks. He also stressed in his campaign speeches the need for family values, elimination from the curriculum of studies "which undermine authority of parents," and emphasis on the basics in schools. As a result, he gathered to his side large numbers of voters, including conservatives, fundamentalists, tax-payer groups, and school critics. It was clear to many who were close to public education that they had to prepare, if not for the worst, for drastic change at the best.

Poll Findings

Two questions with enormously significant answers appeared in the 1980 poll. One showed that Americans currently had even more faith in the importance of schools for success in life than they did in 1973, when the question was first asked. The other showed that Americans had more confidence in the schools to serve the public's needs than in any other institution, with the exception of the church.

The first question and the findings:

How important are schools to one's future success — extremely important, fairly important, not too important?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Extremely important	82	80	85	84
Fairly important	15	16	13	15
Not too important	2	2	2	—
No opinion	1	2	*	1

*Less than 1%.

All groups in the population – the well educated and the poorly educated, rich and poor, male and female, black and white – held this same view.

The second question and the findings:

How much confidence do you, yourself, have in these American institutions *to serve the public's needs* — a great deal of confidence, a fair amount, or very little?

	Great Deal	Fair Amount	Very Little	None (Volunteered)	Undecided
	%	%	%	%	%
The church	42	40	15	2	1
The public schools	28	46	20	3	3
The courts	19	45	28	5	3
Local government	19	51	23	4	3
State government	17	52	24	4	3
National government	14	47	31	5	3
Labor unions	17	38	30	9	6
Big business	13	42	36	5	4

We can conclude that even though the public was critical of the public schools, they held them in high regard when compared with other public institutions.

Teaching as a Career

In two earlier surveys in this series, respondents were asked whether they would like to have a child of theirs take up teaching in the public schools as a career.

When the same question was repeated in the spring of 1980, a significant change in the public's attitude was found. In 1969, 75% of all respondents said they would like to have a child of theirs take up teaching. This figure dropped to 67% in the 1972 survey and fell to 48% in the 1980 survey.

The question and the findings:

Would you like to have a child of yours take up teaching in the public schools as a career?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	48	46	56	43
No	40	41	35	51
Don't know	12	13	9	6

Attempting to account for the opinion change between 1969 and 1980, Gallup said:

> First, there has been a well-known surplus of teachers at many levels and in several subject-matter areas and geographic regions. Young people who would like to teach weren't sure they could find a job after spending at least four years in preparation. Second, teacher salaries have not kept up with inflation; in fact, they have declined more than salaries in most other callings. Finally, there have evidently been real changes in school-age children. They are not as well motivated to learn nowadays. Certainly achievement in the adolescent years has declined. Violence, vandalism, and drug use have been heavily publicized. The public is aware of a phenomenon unheard of in an earlier generation: teacher burnout. No wonder parents are slow to urge their children to enter such a profession.

Major Problems Confronting the Public Schools in 1980

The "major problems" question asked every year revealed no significant perception changes from 1979 to 1980.

The question and the findings:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the *public* schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents** %
Lack of discipline	26	24	26	48
Use of dope/drugs	14	15	12	10
Poor curriculum/poor standards	11	11	10	10
Lack of proper financial support	10	9	11	9
Integration/busing (combined)	10	10	10	10
Large school/too many classes/overcrowding	7	6	8	5
Difficulty in getting good teachers	6	5	7	7
Parents' lack of interest	6	5	6	5
Teachers' lack of interest	6	4	7	8
Pupils' lack of interest/truancy	5	5	6	7
Crime/vandalism	4	5	3	5
Mismanagement of funds/programs	3	2	3	1
Drinking/alcoholism	2	2	1	3
Problems with administration	2	2	1	—
Lack of proper facilities	2	2	2	5
Communication problems	2	2	1	1
School board policies	1	1	1	2
Government interference	1	*	2	3
Teachers' strikes	1	1	1	1
Parents' involvement in school activities	1	1	1	2
Too many schools/declining enrollment	1	1	1	—
Transportation	1	1	*	—
Non-English-speaking students	1	*	2	1
There are no problems	3	2	6	2
Miscellaneous	2	2	3	1
Don't know	17	21	9	8

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)
*Less than 1%.
**Includes parents of students attending private and independent schools as well as parochial schools.

1980 Ratings of the Public Schools

Gallup said:

> Since 1974, when this rating series was first introduced, there has been a decline in the ratings given by the public to the public schools, but this decline has come to a halt. And there is some evidence from the results, although the changes are not statistically significant, that a turn has come.
>
> The decline in the ratings may be due to changes in the emphasis placed upon the basics in many school districts, or to a better understanding among the general public of just what the schools are achieving. In any event, the downward trend has ended, at least for the present.

The question and the findings:

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**10**	**25**	**29**	**12**	**6**	**18**
Sex						
Men	10	27	28	12	6	17
Women	9	24	30	11	6	20
Race						
White	10	26	29	11	6	18
Nonwhite	9	20	29	15	7	20
Age						
18 to 29 years	4	23	39	14	7	13
30 to 49 years	14	28	28	14	5	11
50 years and over	10	24	22	8	7	29
Community size						
1 million and over	10	20	26	19	10	15
500,000 — 999,999	6	24	34	12	7	17
50,000 — 499,999	10	21	32	11	6	20
2,500 — 49,999	11	36	28	5	4	16
Under 2,500	10	28	27	10	4	21
Central City	8	17	31	16	11	17
Education						
Grade school	14	23	16	9	4	34
High school	8	24	33	12	7	16
College	9	30	28	12	6	15

	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Region						
East	8	27	24	14	9	18
Midwest	11	29	33	7	5	15
South	11	25	29	12	4	19
West	7	18	30	15	8	22
Region/Race						
Northern white	9	26	30	11	6	18
Southern white	11	27	27	12	5	18
Northern black	8	19	25	19	14	15
Southern black	11	20	33	12	1	23

Ways to Improve Education In Your Community

What thoughts or suggestions do citizens have for improving education in their own communities? To gain insight into their views, the following question was asked:

Here are a number of things which may have a good effect on the education students receive in the public schools of this community. Will you choose four (from a list of 14 suggestions) which you think are *particularly* important.

Of the 14 suggestions listed, the one that received top priority was "well-educated (trained) teachers and principals." Second in importance, among the public's selections, was "emphasis on basic education"; third was "teachers and principals personally interested in the progress of students."

Gallup said:

> It should be pointed out that the question placed the emphasis upon "education." School morale and community support may be much more closely linked with winning teams and extracurricular activities.
>
> Perhaps the greatest surprise in the public's selection is the relatively low priority given to "small classes" as a way to improve education.

Here are the results ranked in descending order of importance:

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
1. Well-educated teachers and principals	50	50	48	64
2. Emphasis on basics such as reading, writing, computation	49	48	52	52
3. Teachers and principals personally interested in progress of students	44	43	48	38
4. Good parent/teacher relationships	40	39	42	44
5. Careful check on student progress and effort	32	32	32	39
6. An orderly but not rigid atmosphere	27	26	28	38
7. Useful materials and adequate supplies	25	25	27	16
8. Small classes	25	24	28	20
9. Special classes for handicapped students	24	25	21	17
10. High goals and expectations on part of students	19	19	17	25
11. Wide variety of vocational courses	18	17	19	20
12. Advanced classes for the gifted	12	12	11	14
13. Extracurricular activities	6	5	7	7
14. Successful athletic teams	4	4	5	5
Don't know/ no answer	6	7	4	1

Behavior Problems and Who Should Deal with Them

Of the more serious behavior problems with which the public schools must deal, only two of seven, in the opinion of those interviewed in the 1980 survey, should be dealt with by the courts rather than by parents or by the school. The two are "vandalism of school property" and "bringing weapons to school." "Truancy" should be dealt with chiefly by parents, and the school should deal primarily with "fighting in school," "using alcohol or drugs on school property," "striking a teacher," and "stealing money or clothing from other students."

The question and the findings:

Here are some student behavior problems which may occur in school. In your opinion, who should deal with each kind of problem — should it be the parents, the school, or the courts?*

	National Totals			
Who Should Deal with:	Parents %	School %	Courts %	Don't Know %
Truancy (skipping school)	72	45	9	2
Vandalism of school property	44	39	50	2
Bringing weapons to school	41	35	59	3
Fighting in school	42	75	10	3
Using alcohol or drugs on school property	50	57	35	2
Striking a teacher	43	56	35	3
Stealing money or clothing from other students	48	58	30	3

*Multiple answers permitted.

The original data showed that a substantial portion of the public believed most of these problems should be dealt with

by a combination of school and parents, and in some instances by the courts also.

Analysis of the findings by groups revealed no important differences between those who had children attending public school and those who had no children of school age. Those who had children attending independent schools were also in agreement as to where the prime responsibility rests.

Basic Education in Local Schools

In 1980 schools throughout the nation appeared to be giving more attention to basic education. But Gallup observed, "It may take time to convince parents and the general public that enough attention is being given to this program in their own schools." To gain some insight into how parents regarded the back-to-basics movement, this question was asked of parents with children in school:

Is it your impression that the local public school system gives enough attention, or not enough attention, to reading, writing, and arithmetic?

	Asked of Parents Only	
	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%
Enough attention	34	17
Not enough attention	61	72
Don't know	5	11

Questions About School Role and Curriculum

The 1980 poll featured a series of questions having to do with school role and curriculum. A common thread in the findings was that the public is willing to see the public schools take on almost any instructional function the public deems worthy, irrespective of the schools' qualifications or costs. Had these factors been introduced into the questions, answers might have been different.

Learning About Other Nations

Gallup said:

> As communication and travel make the world smaller, and as the threat of a world-devastating war continues, should students spend more time learning about other nations of the world than they presently do? Many educators believe that global education is the trend of the future and that schools should begin to take account of this.

Parents of children attending either public school or parochial school were asked if they thought students should spend more time studying about other people and the way they live. Those with children in the public schools were almost evenly divided: 45% said they should spend more time on global education; 46% said they spend enough time now. The vote of parents with children attending independent schools was also evenly divided.

The question and the findings:

Should students spend more time than they now do learning about other nations of the world and the way people live there, or do you think they spend enough time now?

	Asked of Parents Only	
	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%
Should spend more time	45	46
Spend enough time now	46	47
Don't know	9	7

The Bilingual Problem

As it is today, bilingual education was controversial in 1980. Should students be taught in the language of their parents? Should they be able to learn some of their subjects in their native language while they are learning English?

A third alternative is to require students to learn English in special classes before they are enrolled in the public schools. This alternative appealed to more than eight out of every 10 persons included in the 1980 survey. And it received overwhelming approval by all major groups in the population.

The question and the findings:

Many families who come from other countries have children who cannot speak English. Should or should not these children be required to learn English in special classes before they are enrolled in the public schools?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, they should	82	82	83	80
No, they should not	13	13	13	18
Don't know	5	5	4	2

Moral Instruction

In the 1975 survey in this series a question dealt with the need for instruction in morals and moral behavior. The vote at that time was overwhelmingly in favor: 79% in favor, 15% opposed, 6% no opinion. In the 1980 survey almost identical results were found: 79% in favor, 16% opposed, and 5% with no opinion.

Gallup said:

> In the early years of public school education, the teaching of morals was regarded as an integral part of the educational program. Anyone who examines the McGuffey Readers, first published in 1836, will discover that the teaching of morals was as important as the teaching of reading. And as the *Columbia Encyclopedia* observes, "Their influence in shaping the American mind of the mid-19th century can scarcely be exaggerated."
>
> No one has yet found a good modern equivalent of these readers as a way to instruct students in morals and moral

behavior, but, as the survey findings indicate, the public is eagerly hoping that a way to achieve this type of instruction will be found. It is significant that parents of children now attending school are the group that favors this kind of instruction most, although all major groups in the population strongly favor the idea.

Here is the question asked both in 1975 and 1980:

Would you favor or oppose instruction in the schools that would deal with morals and moral behavior?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	79	78	84	83
Oppose	16	17	12	12
Don't know	5	5	4	5

Preparing for One-Parent Families

Gallup said:

The American public appears to be ready to deal with a problem that is certain to have an important effect on schooling. Children who spend a substantial amount of time with a lone parent will undoubtedly have a different home environment, different training, and special needs.

To cope with this situation, three proposals were presented to those persons included in the survey; all three were approved by overwhelming majorities.

The question and the findings:

The number of one-parent families in the U.S. is growing each year due to the high divorce rate, and it is predicted that nearly half of the children born in 1980 will live, for a considerable period of time, with only one parent. Because of this, some people believe that the schools must find new ways to deal with the children from these broken homes. Of course, this will cost more money. Now, here are three proposals. For each one tell me whether you think it would be a good idea or a poor idea for the schools here.

Proposal 1
Make school personnel available for evening counseling with single parents who are working if their children are having trouble at school.

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Good idea	86	86	85	84
Poor idea	10	9	12	15
Don't know	4	5	3	1

Proposal 2
Give teachers training to help them deal with special problems of children from one-parent families.

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Good idea	83	84	83	81
Poor idea	12	11	13	16
Don't know	5	5	4	3

Proposal 3
Provide activities so children can spend more time at school rather than going to an empty house.

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Good idea	76	79	70	72
Poor idea	18	15	26	25
Don't know	6	6	4	3

Helping Students Get Jobs

Gallup said:

One of the most perplexing problems that modern industrial societies face is how best to deal with student transition from school to job. The very high unemployment rate in the U.S. among high school graduates and dropouts has yet to be solved. Some European nations have found that a combination of postsecondary schooling and job apprenticeship helps ease the transition from school to job. In the U.S. – judging from the high unemployment rates of youth – we have yet to find a solution. This fact accounts, perhaps, for the highly favorable vote for the proposal to add personnel to the school staff to help students and recent graduates get jobs.

Every group in the population favored this idea, and by very substantial amounts. Understandably, nonwhites, who have the highest youth unemployment rates in the population, were most in favor.

The question and the findings:

In your opinion, should or should not the public schools *add personnel* to help students and recent graduates get jobs?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, they should add personnel	64	65	64	53
No, they should not	30	29	32	45
Don't know	6	6	4	2

Adult Education

Extrapolating from the 1980 poll data, about 45 million Americans (age 18 and older) said they had taken courses in an adult education program or were currently engaged in such a program. A total of 13 million said they had taken such a course during the past year.

By far the greatest number of persons enrolled came from the 18-to-29 age group and from those who had attended college. Adult education was much more popular in the West than in other sections of the country. The lowest percentage of enrollees in adult education programs lived in Eastern states.

The question, first asked in 1950 by the Gallup Poll and repeated in 1978 and again in the 1980 survey, was:

Are you now taking, or have you ever taken, any courses in an adult education program?

	1950	1978	1980
	%	%	%
Yes	20	31	29
No	80	68	70
Don't know	*	1	1

*Less than 1%.

Respondents who said they had taken a course in an adult education program were then asked, "When was that?" Eight percent said they had taken a course within the last year, 8% said one to three years ago, and 13% said more than three years ago.

What Level of Government Should Decide Curriculum Content?

The American public continued to believe in 1980 that the local school board should have the greatest influence in deciding what is taught in the public schools. Even state government won few supporters as the agency that should decide what is taught locally.

Gallup said:

> In most European nations the curriculum is determined by the central government. With education now being represented within the U.S. government by a Cabinet position, the issue of who should set school curriculum is almost certain to arise here in the U.S. in coming years.

The question and the findings:

In your opinion, who should have the *greatest* influence in deciding what is taught in the public schools here — the federal government, the state government, or the local school board?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
The federal government	9	9	8	10
The state government	15	16	15	15
The local school board	68	66	70	70
Don't know	8	9	7	5

Keeping in Touch with Parents of Schoolchildren

One of the complaints that parents voice is that the school does not keep them sufficiently well informed about the progress of their children or give them enough guidance as to what they, as parents, can do at home to help their children in school. These sentiments gave rise to the following question:

In your opinion, should or should not parents be asked to meet with school personnel before each new school semester to examine the grades, test scores, and career goals for each child and to work out a program to be followed both in school and at home?

Wide approval for this suggestion was found throughout the nation, as the following figures reveal:

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, favor this plan	84	85	83	83
No, do not favor	11	9	14	14
Don't know	5	6	3	3

The highest vote in favor of the plan was found among Northern blacks. They voted for it 95 to 1.

Overwhelming support for the idea came from every group in the population in every area of the nation.

Requiring Nonunion Members to Pay Union Dues

In 1980 the public was fairly evenly divided on the question of whether teachers – in districts where there are teacher unions – should be required to pay union dues even though they do not belong to the union. A slight plurality was found on the side of requiring them to pay dues. The public's ambivalence toward unions had been evidenced in earlier surveys indicating that, while respondents favored unions for teachers, they were opposed to strikes.

The question and the findings:

In schools where there are teacher unions, should those teachers who do not belong to the union be required to pay union dues, since they share the benefits of union bargaining?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, should be required	47	47	49	51
No, should not	44	44	43	47
Don't know	9	9	8	2

Differences were found on this issue by sections of the nation. Residents of the South opposed requiring teachers to pay union dues when they did not belong by a vote of 54%, opposed to 37% in favor. Sentiment was evenly divided in small cities and rural communities. The college educated, who are found largely in the upper-income levels, voted against this requirement, 58% to 35%.

Should Public School Teachers Be Permitted to Strike?

In 1980, a conservative trend in most areas of American life evidenced by survey findings paralleled increasing public opposition to strikes by public school teachers. In 1975, when this question was last put to the public in this series, a slight majority opposed strikes. The vote then was 48% opposed to strikes and 45% in favor, with 7% having no opinion. When the same question was asked in the 1980 survey, 52% opposed strikes, 40% favored them, and 8% had no opinion.

The question and the findings:

Should public school teachers be permitted to strike or not?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	40	39	43	41
No	52	53	49	51
Don't know	8	8	8	8

The greatest changes were found among college-educated respondents, a group that favored strikes in 1975 by a 52% to 44% margin. In 1980 their position was nearly reversed. They opposed strikes 51% to 43%.

In the Eastern states opinion was equally divided in 1975. A total of 46% favored strikes; 46% opposed them. In 1980 the comparable figures were 34% in favor, 58% opposed.

Interestingly, parents of children attending the public schools had less objection to strikes than did those with no children of school age.

One-Year Internship for Teachers

The difficulty of getting "good" teachers is perceived as a serious problem by enough people to place it among the top 10 "most important problems facing the local schools."

Gallup said:

> This may explain, in part, why the public favors the idea of an internship of one year at half pay for those who wish to enter the teaching profession. On the other hand, an internship at half pay may discourage many young persons from entering this profession, which is already losing some of its appeal.

The question and the findings:

Teachers now receive certificates to teach upon completion of their college coursework. Some people believe that teachers should be required to spend one year as interns in the schools at half pay before they are given a certificate to teach. Do you think this is a good idea or a poor idea?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Good idea	56	56	55	56
Poor idea	36	35	37	42
Don't know	8	9	8	2

Analysis of the vote by groups indicated that many recent graduates – those 18 to 29 years of age – were in favor of the internship proposal. People over age 50 tended to oppose the idea, as shown below.

	Internship for Teachers		
	Good Idea	Poor Idea	Don't Know
Age	%	%	%
18 to 29 years	62	32	6
30 to 49 years	59	35	6
50 & over	49	39	12

Cost of Education

Gallup said:

> The idea has been advanced that if parents and their school-age children knew how much money is spent to provide an education for them, absenteeism would decline. In short, if being absent from school could be correlated with dollars, then the temptation to stay away from classes and from school would be reduced.
>
> The costs can be estimated in this way: The average school year consists of 184 days, and the average cost for each child per school year is approximately $1,800 to $2,000, or about $10 per day. Since there are usually five class periods per day, then the cost per class per student is about $2.
>
> One of the first questions to be asked is how these amounts – $10 per school day, $2 per class – strike the average citizen. Do the figures seem high, low, or about what is expected?

Here is the question put to respondents in the 1980 survey and the findings:

It costs taxpayers about $2 an hour for each student for each class he or she attends — or about $10 for each school day. Are these figures higher, lower, or about the same as what you had thought?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
Cost Per School Day	%	%	%	%
Higher	29	29	29	16
Lower	19	17	23	29
About the same	34	34	33	39
Don't know	18	20	15	16

Gallup said:

> The greatest differences are found between the best-educated group (those who have attended college) and the least well educated (those whose education ended with grade school). To the grade school group the figures were higher than expected: 34% to 10%; with the college educated the costs cited were slightly lower than expected: 23% to 25%.
>
> Since lower-income respondents were much more inclined to underestimate the costs, and since the children of the poorer families of the nation are most likely to drop out of school or be absent from classes, this argument about cost and wasted money might be useful to students and their parents in promoting regular school attendance. The student who has been absent 10 days has, in effect, lost $100.

Nongraded Schools

The nongraded school concept continued to win wide approval from the public, even though the approval percentage was down slightly from the 1972 survey, when the question was first asked.

Should a student be able to progress through the school system at his own speed and without regard to the usual grade levels? This would mean that he might study seventh-grade math but only fifth-grade English. Would you favor or oppose such a plan in the local schools?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Favor	62	63	60	60
Oppose	30	28	35	37
No opinion	8	9	5	3

Early Graduation

In 1980 every major group in the population believed that, if high school students can meet academic requirements in three years instead of four, they should be permitted to graduate early. Least enthusiastic about this proposal were parents of children then attending school. On the other hand, those most in favor were recent graduates – persons 18 to 29 years of age.

When this question was first asked in 1977, similar results were found. Gallup said:

> It can be argued that in an era of increasing specialization, with students requiring more and more years of college and post-college training, an earlier start on college work would permit a student to engage in his or her chosen calling that much earlier. But many parents are reluctant to see their children go off to college at the age of 17 or earlier.

The question and the findings:

If high school students can meet academic requirements in three years instead of four, should they, or should they not, be permitted to graduate early?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, should	77	79	73	70
No, should not	19	16	24	26
Don't know	4	5	3	4

Priorities for the New Federal Department of Education

To gain some insight into the priorities, as the American public perceived them, for the newly established Department of Education in the federal government, respondents in the 1980 survey were asked what this new department should give special attention to during the next few years. They were handed a list of 13 areas and were asked to choose five of the 13 that they thought merited the most attention.

The list was by no means all-inclusive, and the areas listed were not necessarily the ones regarded as most important by either Congress or by top officials of the new Department of Education. The results, however, provided an indication of the way the public thought about educational priorities.

The question and the findings:

As you may know, a new federal Department of Education has been established with Cabinet status. We would like to know what you think this new department should give *special attention* to in the next few years. Will you choose five of the areas listed on this card which you think are *most* important.

The priorities that follow are arranged in descending order of mention nationwide:

Areas that the public hopes the new Department of Education will give special attention to in the next few years:	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
1. Basic education (reading, writing, arithmetic)	69	68	72	71
2. Vocational training (training students for jobs)	56	55	57	53
3. Improving teacher training and education	46	44	50	51
4. Helping students choose careers	46	46	44	44
5. Parent training to help parents become more fully involved in their children's education	45	48	37	48
6. Helping more students obtain a college education	35	34	38	34
7. Developing individual educational plans for every child	33	31	38	35
8. Providing more opportunities for gifted students	25	25	26	23
9. Preschool education	24	26	21	19
10. Lifelong learning (continuing education through adult life)	23	22	21	33
11. Better educational use of television	20	20	21	19
12. International education, including foreign language study	19	19	20	20
13. Improving opportunities for women and minorities	18	18	17	14

(Figures add to more than 100% due to multiple responses.)

Chapter 14
The Thirteenth Annual Poll, 1981

Events of the Year in Education

Discipline in the public schools – how firm, how weak, how adequate?

Over the years parents and the general public provided a variety of opinions. In 1981 the nation's school administrators gave *their* response, describing the extent of discipline problems prevailing in their districts and what they were doing about them. Facts and opinions came from a structured sample of 2,000 superintendents and principals surveyed by the American Association of School Administrators.

Close to 63% of the respondents said discipline was *not* the most serious problem in their districts. (Finances, curriculum revision, declining enrollments, and negotiations with teachers topped discipline as of greater concern to school districts.) Thirty-seven percent, however, considered discipline a problem, and they listed the 10 "serious" and "somewhat serious" student infractions in order of frequency: apathy, smoking, insubordination (accompanied by profanity), student use of marijuana, alcohol, tardiness, absenteeism, class cutting, vandalism, and theft of property in schools.

The survey also showed that never before in the history of the public schools have so much enterprise and invention been brought to bear on improving student conduct. Never before has such intense effort been devoted to understanding the causes of student misbehavior and finding the right measures to ensure that teaching and learning can go on in healthy school environments.

In the interest of improving student conduct, administrators invented new types of machinery in schools: faculty discipline committees, crisis intervention teams, student grievance and appeals committees, parent councils on discipline, and student-supported funds to pay for vandalism. Administrators also involved boards of education in setting limits to misbehavior (through policies and regulations). They sought the help of students and parents to develop and enact student codes of conduct. They launched inservice programs on controlling disruptions in the classroom.

School districts used punitive measures as a counterforce to student misbehavior, including corporal punishment (in rare cases and where permitted by law), expulsion, and out-of-school and in-school suspension. But administrators relied also on what they called "developing" measures, such as broadening extracurricular activities and student government; providing adequate counseling services; and, above all, making classrooms interesting, challenging, and inviting places for teaching and learning.

During the course of a decade, school districts kept a sharp lookout on enrollments and saw them declining. The drop began in elementary grades and gradually reached the high school. From 1971 to 1981 the total shrinkage, public and private, in grades K-12, was from 51,181,000 to 44,958,000. During the 10th year of decline, more than two-thirds of the nation's school districts and their administrators were enmeshed in problems growing out of the downward enrollment trends.

Two major problems were 1) what to do with empty classrooms, and 2) how to respond to the surplus of teachers.

School officials who had to decide what to do with surplus school buildings faced several options: sell to private or public buyers; keep buildings under board of education control but convert the space for use as alternative schools, adult education centers, and facilities for gifted and talented students; or simply tear them down. No matter what approach school authorities chose, they soon learned that closing a school building or changing its function was a political, social, and often an emotional issue, and that decisions had to be made with the advice of municipal authorities, community leaders, and parents.

The disposition of surplus school buildings was a relatively minor issue compared to the "people problem" of working out solutions with teachers affected by enrollment decline. The direct approach was reduction in force, but RIF, as educators called it, was a process fraught with difficulties that left no one happy. Some districts retained "excess" teachers to reduce class size. Others offered voluntary early retirement or part-time employment.

Many administrators saw a bright side to declining enrollments. "Silver linings" included: opportunity to break with tradition and reorganize school districts into more productive units, using surplus buildings for new types of educational services, taking advantage of smaller enrollments to provide individualized instruction, and reducing bureaucratic controls to save money.

When, in 1981, educators looked closely at mathematics instruction in the nation's schools, they unhesitatingly declared that subject "a disaster area" or crisis.

One indicator of that crisis was the low achievement of American students compared to those of Japan, Canada, Israel, and 18 other countries. In arithmetic and algebra, Japanese and Canadian students far outstripped those in the United States, with the mean achievement of our students falling in the middle of the countries under study. In geometry and in measurement, not only were Japan and Canada first in achievement, but the scores of United States students were near the bottom of the international achievement scale.

A second indicator of the crisis was that all high school seniors in the United States, scheduled for graduation in 1982, had taken an average of only 2.7 years of mathematics,

"a disconcertingly low figure," according to mathematics specialists.

A third crisis indicator was the shortage of qualified mathematics teachers, which the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics called "one of the most pressing problems facing education today." Certified teachers were difficult to find anywhere in the country; in large cities only one certified teacher applied for every 10 mathematics teaching vacancies. Further, some of the best math teachers were leaving the profession, lured by business and industry with high-paying jobs.

One solution proposed for the crisis added to the problem. When state legislatures and boards of education raised graduation requirements to include three to four years of mathematics, they did little to provide for the additional teachers that would be needed. A second solution, again, did little to improve mathematics instruction. Faced with classes of students and no certified mathematics teachers, administrators tended to assign teachers from other fields to teach albegra, geometry, and calculus.

As the year ended, the nation's mathematics supervisors and specialists complained that "real solutions are still nowhere in sight."

Sex Education

The 1981 poll gave more detailed attention than earlier polls to the always controversial question of sex education in the public schools. For the first time, people were asked what particular topics under the heading of sex education should be covered in grade school and high school.

Results of the 1980 survey showed 65% of the respondents approving sex education in the public schools, 28% disapproving, and 7% with no opinion. In the 1981 survey, 70% said they thought sex education should be included in the instructional program of high schools, 22% said it should not be, and 8% had no opinion. The public was fairly evenly divided on the issue of sex education in the elementary schools. Forty-five percent said it should be included, 48% said no, and 7% gave no opinion.

The question about sex education in high schools and the findings:

Do you feel the public high schools should or should not include sex education in their instructional program?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Should	70	66	79	79
Should not	22	25	16	17
No opinion	8	9	5	4

The next question and the findings:

Do you feel the public elementary schools should or should not include sex education in grades 4 through 8?

	Sex Education in Elementary Schools			
	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Should	45	41	52	61
Should not	48	50	43	32
No opinion	7	9	5	7

Further analysis of the findings by groups revealed that parents with children attending public or nonpublic schools overwhelmingly favored sex education for students in high school. They also favored sex education in elementary schools (grades 4 through 8), but by a smaller margin.

The younger age groups favored sex education both in elementary and in high schools. The older age groups held the opposite view.

Respondents who had attended college strongly approved of sex education in the schools. Those with only a grade school education strongly disapproved.

Persons living in the West favored sex education in the schools much more strongly than persons living in the South.

Catholics approved of sex education in high schools and, by a slight margin, in the elementary schools. In fact, Catholics approved of sex education in both high schools and elementary schools to a slightly greater extent than did Protestants.

Further breakdowns:

	Offer Sex Education in High Schools		
	Should	Should Not	Don't Know
	%	%	%
NATIONAL TOTALS	**70**	**22**	**8**
Sex			
Men	71	23	6
Women	70	22	8
Race			
White	71	22	7
Nonwhite	68	22	10
Age			
18 to 29 years	86	10	4
30 to 49 years	77	18	5
50 years and over	53	35	12
Community size			
1 million and over	72	17	11
500,000 — 999,999	78	14	8
50,000 — 499,999	74	22	4
2,500 — 49,999	64	28	8
Under 2,500	66	27	7
Central cities	71	20	9
Education			
Grade school	42	47	11
High school	71	20	9
College	83	14	3

Topics to Be Included in Sex Education Instruction

Interviewers asked those persons who favored sex education in the high schools to choose the topics they thought should be included in an instructional program. Each respondent who approved of this instruction was handed a card

that listed seven subjects. The same procedure was used in respect to sex education in the elementary schools.

The list of topics was not designed to be complete but was intended to shed light on the kinds of topics the public would like to have included in a program of sex education.

	Topics That Should Be Included by All Those Who Favor Sex Education	
	In High School Program %	In Elementary School Program %
1. Venereal disease	84	52
2. Birth control	79	45
3. The biology of reproduction	77	83
4. Premarital sex	60	40
5. Abortion	54	26
6. Nature of sexual intercourse	53	36
7. Homosexuality	45	23

	Topics That Should Be Included by Parents Who Favor Sex Education	
	In High School Program %	In Elementary School Program %
1. Venereal disease	85	46
2. Birth control	77	38
3. The biology of reproduction	78	85
4. Premarital sex	59	30
5. Abortion	52	20
6. Nature of sexual intercourse	48	35
7. Homosexuality	40	19

The Amount of Attention Given to Six Educational Objectives

The public expects a great deal from the public schools. The findings from a question concerning six objectives of education are further evidence of these high expectations.

Most studies dealing with the goals of education reveal that the public expects the public schools to assume responsibilities that in the past have been borne by the home and the church. For example, in the 1981 survey the objective that received the highest vote from respondents was "developing students' moral and ethical character."

Gallup said:

> The concern for "teaching students to think," shown in the results, may spur present efforts to find procedures that improve thinking ability. One nation, Venezuela, has appointed a minister of cabinet rank to help improve the thinking abilities of students in that country. And both Great Britain and the United States are mounting promising efforts to improve the problem-solving abilities of students.

The question:

I am going to read off some of the areas to which the public high schools devote attention in educating students. As I read off these areas, one at a time, would you tell me whether you feel the high schools in your community devote too much attention, not enough attention, or about the right amount of attention to that area.

The results, listed in order of those saying "not enough" attention:

	Too Much %	Not Enough %	Right Amount %	Don't Know %
1. Developing students' moral and ethical character	2	62	21	15
2. Teaching students how to think	2	59	25	14
3. Preparing students who do not go to college for a job or career after graduation	2	56	29	13
4. Preparing students to become informed citizens prepared to vote at 18	2	55	28	15
5. Preparing students for college	3	43	39	15
6. Developing students' appreciation of art, music, and other cultural interests	7	37	41	15

The views of three different groups in the population have special significance in considering the objectives of education: parents with children now attending the public schools; the age group (18 to 29) who have had the most recent school experience; and those who have pursued their education to the college level.

Substantial agreement was found among these three groups and the general public as to the objectives that need greater attention in the nation's public high schools.

The results:

	Objectives That Receive "Not Enough" Attention In High School			
	National Totals %	Public School Parents %	18-29 Age Group %	College Educated %
1. Developing students' moral and ethical character	62	66	63	64
2. Teaching students to think	59	58	58	62
3. Preparing students who do not go to college for a job or career after graduation	56	56	56	56
4. Preparing students to become informed citizens ready to vote at 18	55	54	58	61
5. Preparing students for college	43	46	46	43
6. Developing students' appreciation of art, music, and other cultural interests	37	37	43	43

How Well Are the Public Schools Teaching Different Subjects?

The 1981 survey attempted to ascertain how parents with children then attending school regarded the quality of instruction in different subject areas. Only parents with children in school were questioned, since it was assumed that the general public is not well enough informed to pass judgment on the schools' performance in these subject areas.

The survey findings indicated that, in the absence of standardized test scores and other objective data, parents, too, find it difficult to rate the quality of instruction offered in different subject areas.

Overall attitudes toward the public schools apparently have an important influence on ratings, a fact revealed by the similarity in the ratings given different subject areas.

The most revealing ratings were those at the two extremes – the top ratings (A and B) compared with the lowest ratings (D and FAIL). These ratings are given by individuals who are most likely to be concerned and who, therefore, are most likely to transform their feelings into some type of action.

The question:

Using the A, B, C, D, and FAIL scale again, please grade the job you feel the public schools here are doing in providing education in each of the following areas.

The interviewer then read a list of nine subject areas, asking the respondent to rate each subject in turn, with these results:

	A or B Rating %	D or FAIL Rating %
Physical education	61	6
Music	49	11
Reading	48	16
Mathematics	47	14
Writing	46	18
Science	44	10
Art	42	11
Social studies	42	11
Vocational training	35	21

In addition to learning how parents with children now in school rate the quality of instruction in different subjects, it is useful to examine the ratings given by two subgroups in the parent population: 1) graduates of the school system in recent years – the 18-to-34 age group – and 2) individuals who have attended college. Obviously these are not mutually exclusive groups.

The findings follow:

Parents' Rating of the Quality of Instruction

Reading	All Parents %	18-34 %	College %	Public School Parents %
A	16	15	16	17
B	32	29	31	34
C	27	23	27	25
D	11	13	14	10
FAIL	5	5	5	5
Don't know	9	15	7	9

Writing	All Parents %	18-34 %	College %	Public School Parents %
A	12	11	10	13
B	34	34	32	36
C	27	21	31	25
D	12	11	15	12
FAIL	6	8	5	5
Don't know	9	15	7	9

Mathematics	All Parents %	18-34 %	College %	Public School Parents %
A	13	12	14	14
B	34	26	40	35
C	29	28	30	28
D	10	13	6	10
FAIL	4	5	3	3
Don't know	10	16	7	10

Science	All Parents %	18-34 %	College %	Public School Parents %
A	11	9	9	12
B	33	26	40	34
C	33	30	31	32
D	7	12	8	7
FAIL	3	2	3	2
Don't know	13	21	9	13

Social Studies	All Parents %	18-34 %	College %	Public School Parents %
A	11	9	12	11
B	32	25	31	34
C	32	32	37	31
D	8	10	5	8
FAIL	3	4	3	3
Don't know	14	20	12	13

Music	All Parents %	18-34 %	College %	Public School Parents %
A	17	13	15	18
B	32	31	31	32
C	22	21	27	21
D	9	12	10	8
FAIL	3	3	2	3
Don't know	17	20	15	18

Physical Education	All Parents %	18-34 %	College %	Public School Parents %
A	21	17	20	22
B	41	38	45	41
C	20	18	21	19
D	4	8	5	4
FAIL	2	3	1	2
Don't know	12	16	8	12

Art	All Parents %	18-34 %	College %	Public School Parents %
A	12	14	13	13
B	30	27	30	32
C	28	27	33	26
D	9	12	8	9
FAIL	2	2	2	2
Don't know	19	18	14	18

Vocational or Job Training	All Parents %	18-34 %	College %	Public School Parents %
A	8	6	7	8
B	27	21	26	28
C	25	21	29	24
D	15	16	15	15
FAIL	6	6	7	6
Don't know	19	30	16	19

Parents Who Gave an A or B Rating to Instruction in Different Subject Areas

The ratings (A or B) given by respondents in different regions of the nation also provide insight in regard to parents' opinions of the quality of instruction children were receiving in different subjects.

	East %	Midwest %	South %	West %
Reading	50	47	49	45
Writing	46	46	52	37
Mathematics	51	44	51	41
Science	54	41	44	33
Social studies	52	39	44	33
Music	54	50	49	49
Physical education	65	62	64	52
Art	50	42	39	39
Vocational education	35	36	39	29

Instruction in Values

Americans continued to favor instruction in values and ethical behavior as part of the public school curriculum by a ratio of about four to one, 70% to 17%. Parents with public school children were slightly more likely to support such a proposal than nonparents.

The question and the findings:

Would you favor or oppose instruction in the schools that would deal with values and ethical behavior?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	70	67	73	79
Oppose	17	18	15	16
No opinion	13	15	12	5

Analysis of the survey findings by socioeconomic groups indicated that strong majority support for instruction in values and ethical behavior existed in all population segments. It was especially high in the South (73%) and in small-town America, communities with fewer than 2,500 inhabitants (74%).

In contrast, the lowest level of support for values instruction (58%) was registered in the nation's largest metropolitan areas, that is, cities with populations of more than 1 million.

1981 Ratings of the Public Schools

The 1981 survey provided further evidence that the decline in the ratings given by the public to the public schools in their communities had come to a halt. Only slight changes had been recorded since 1976.

The question and the findings:

Students are often given the grades A, B, D, C, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	National Totals							
Ratings Given Public Schools	1981 %	1980 %	1979 %	1978 %	1977 %	1976 %	1975 %	1974 %
A rating	9	10	8	9	11	13	13	18
B rating	27	25	26	27	26	29	30	30
C rating	34	29	30	30	28	28	28	21
D rating	13	12	11	11	11	10	9	6
FAIL	7	6	7	8	5	6	7	5
Don't know	10	18	18	15	19	14	13	20

Younger citizens – the more recent graduates – were significantly more critical of the public schools than were their elders.

Residents of cities with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants had a much higher opinion of their public schools than persons living in cities with populations of more than 1 million.

In this survey, as in earlier ones, persons living in the West rated their schools lower than persons in other sections of the nation. Southerners gave their schools the highest grades.

Further breakdowns:

	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**9**	**27**	**34**	**13**	**7**	**10**
Sex						
Men	7	28	35	13	7	10
Women	10	25	33	13	8	11
Race						
White	9	27	33	13	8	10
Nonwhite	9	24	39	13	7	8
Age						
18 to 29 years	4	24	42	15	8	7
30 to 49 years	9	30	32	14	7	8
50 years and over	12	25	30	11	7	15
Community size						
1 million and over	5	25	33	17	9	11
500,000 — 999,999	11	28	29	13	11	8
50,000 — 499,999	6	22	38	16	7	11
2,500 — 49,999	15	28	31	9	7	10
Under 2,500	9	30	35	10	5	11
Central cities	5	20	38	15	12	10
Education						
Grade school	11	26	26	10	10	17
High school	7	26	36	13	8	10
College	10	28	34	15	5	8
Region						
East	7	27	33	12	9	12
Midwest	10	30	33	13	6	8
South	11	26	32	12	5	14
West	5	23	38	16	10	8

Parents with children attending the public schools gave these schools a substantially higher grade than did persons who had no children in school or parents who were sending their children to nonpublic schools, as the following table shows:

	Rating of the Public Schools					
By Parents with:	**A %**	**B %**	**C %**	**D %**	**FAIL %**	**Don't Know %**
Children in public schools	11	35	34	10	6	4
Children in nonpublic schools	6	19	37	18	12	8
No children in school	8	23	34	13	8	14

Rating of Public Schools Nationally

The yearly surveys frequently gave rise to the question whether residents of a given community tend to rate *their own* schools higher or lower than they do the public schools *nationally*. To shed light on this point, the 1981 survey asked respondents to rate the public schools nationally as well as the schools of their own community.

The results make clear that people tend to have a higher regard for their own schools than for the public schools of the nation. Whereas 36% give their own schools a rating of A or B, only 20% give the public schools of the nation as high a rating.

The question and the findings:

How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools *nationally* — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
Public schools in this community	9	27	34	13	7	10
Public schools in the nation	2	18	43	15	6	16

Elementary Schools Get Better Ratings than High Schools

For the first time in 1981, the annual survey compared ratings of public elementary and high schools. As most educators had predicted, the findings show that elementary schools rate considerably higher in public esteem. For example, 46% of the respondents gave their local elementary schools an A or a B, whereas only 32% rated their high schools that high.

The questions and the findings:

Thinking again of the public schools in *this community* — what grade would you give the *elementary schools* here — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

What grade would you give the public *high schools* here — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	Rating of Elementary Schools Versus High Schools	
	Public Elementary Schools %	**Public High Schools %**
A rating	13	7
B rating	33	25
C rating	27	31
D rating	7	15
FAIL	5	9
Don't know	15	13

How the Public Grades Teachers in Their Own Community

Using the same scale as that used to rate the schools, respondents were asked to rate the teachers in the local public schools. The teachers fared slightly better than the schools themselves.

The question and the findings:

Now, what grade would you give the teachers in the public schools in this community — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	Rating of Teachers %	Rating of Schools %
A rating	11	9
B rating	28	27
C rating	31	34
D rating	9	13
FAIL	6	7
Don't know	15	10

Demographically, the ratings given teachers and the ratings given schools were much alike. Highest teacher ratings went to those who teach in the Midwest and South, lowest to those in the East and West. Teachers in cities of more than 1 million were rated lower than those in the smallest towns. Parents with children attending public schools rated their teachers appreciably higher than those who did not have children in school and higher than those whose children attended nonpublic schools.

Further breakdowns:

	Ratings of Public School Teachers					
	A	B	C	D	FAIL	Don't Know
	%	%	%	%	%	%
NATIONAL TOTALS	**11**	**28**	**31**	**9**	**6**	**15**
Sex						
Men	10	30	32	10	6	12
Women	12	28	30	8	6	16
Race						
White	10	28	32	9	6	15
Nonwhite	14	34	26	9	9	8
Age						
18 to 29 years	7	28	35	11	7	12
30 to 49 years	13	30	31	10	7	9
50 years and over	12	26	27	8	6	21
Community size						
1 million and over	6	30	34	9	10	11
500,000 — 999,999	12	31	24	10	9	14
50,000 — 499,999	11	22	33	10	6	18
2,500 — 49,999	19	27	27	7	4	16
Under 2,500	11	32	32	9	4	12
Central cities	9	24	33	9	9	16
Education						
Grade school	16	27	20	9	8	20
High school	10	27	32	10	7	14
College	10	32	33	8	4	13
Region						
East	8	27	31	11	8	15
Midwest	13	30	33	8	5	11
South	15	29	26	8	5	17
West	7	28	32	11	8	14

Major Problems Confronting the Public Schools

Although discipline continued, as it had for many years, to be regarded as the number-one problem facing the local public schools, a slight decline was registered. But this decline did not show up with parents of children attending the public schools, and it is this group whose opinions are likely to be the best informed.

The order of the problems mentioned remained virtually the same as in 1980. Use of drugs received the second highest number of mentions; poor curriculum/low standards was in third place.

Entering the list for the first time, and mentioned often enough to put it in the top half, was "lack of respect for other students and for teachers."

The question and the findings:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the *public* schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Lack of discipline	23	21	26	29
Use of drugs	15	16	13	15
Poor curriculum/poor standards	14	13	14	12
Lack of proper financial support	12	10	16	11
Difficulty of getting good teachers	11	9	14	9
Integration/busing (combined)	11	12	9	18
Large schools/overcrowding	5	3	7	14
Parents' lack of interest	5	6	4	4
Teachers' lack of interest	4	4	5	5
Lack of respect for other students/ teachers	4	4	6	4
Pupils' lack of interest/truancy	4	5	2	3
Crime/vandalism	3	3	2	1
Mismanagement of funds	3	2	3	6
Problems with administration	3	3	3	3
Drinking/alcoholism	2	2	1	2
Lack of proper facilities	2	2	2	3
Non-English-speaking students	1	1	1	2
Communication problems	1	1	2	1
Too many schools/declining enrollment	1	1	2	1
Moral standards	1	1	2	1
Teachers' strikes	1	1	1	1
School board policies	1	1	1	1
Government interference	1	1	2	2
Parents' involvement in school activities	1	*	*	1
Transportation	*	1	*	—
There are no problems	3	1	6	1
Miscellaneous	5	5	6	3
Don't know/ no answer	12	16	5	9

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)
*Less than one-half of 1%.

Financial Support of the Public Schools

School policy makers are crucially interested in the percentage of the public willing to pay more taxes if school authorities say the money is needed. For this reason, the following question was asked five times in the first 13 polls:

Suppose the local public schools said they needed much more money. As you feel at this time, would you vote to raise taxes for this purpose, or would you vote against raising taxes for this purpose?

Gallup said:

> The results show roughly the same downward trend as the ratings given the public schools. More important, perhaps, has been the trend toward conservative fiscal policies

evidenced in elections during recent years. The decline in the school population in many areas could also account in part for the lower percentage of approval on this question.

For those who are interested in school bond issues or increasing school budgets, the results are not so grim as they seem. The persons least likely to vote in elections or on bond issues are the most opposed to voting increases for the schools.

Financial Support Of the Public Schools

NATIONAL RESULTS	Favor Raising Taxes %	Opposed to Raising Taxes %	Don't Know %
1981 survey	30	60	10
1972 survey	36	56	8
1971 survey	40	52	8
1970 survey	37	56	7
1969 survey	45	49	6

1981 survey	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know %
Parents of children attending public schools	36	58	6
Parents of children attending nonpublic schools	35	57	8
Adults with no children in school	27	60	13

When asked to give the reasons why they would vote for or against raising taxes to support the local schools, respondents who would vote *for* increases gave these reasons, in order of mention.

1. Education is so important today that any increases are warranted.
2. The schools do not have enough money to operate efficiently.
3. More money is needed to get better teachers.
4. Better/additional facilities are needed.

Those who *opposed* increases cited these reasons:

1. Much of the money now spent on the schools is wasted.
2. Taxes are already too high/can't afford more.
3. Teachers are not doing their job/shouldn't get increases.
3. The schools have a poor performance record.

Tax Support for Parochial Schools

The 1970 survey included a question about helping parochial schools make ends meet with help from government tax money. By a small minority, a representative sample of the nation's adults voted at that time in favor of this proposal.

In the 1981 survey, a majority *opposed* this government help from tax funds.

As reported above, the public opposed raising more tax money for the local public schools, and this same fiscal conservatism undoubtedly influenced attitudes about helping parochial schools with financial aid. In the 1974 survey, the public actually favored an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would permit government financial aid to parochial schools.

The question and the findings:

It has been proposed that some government tax money be used to help parochial (church-related) schools make ends meet. How do you feel about this? Do you favor or oppose giving some government tax money to help parochial schools?

1981 Survey	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor tax support	40	40	37	59
Oppose	51	50	56	35
No opinion	9	10	7	6

National Results for 1970 Compared with 1981

	1970 %	1981 %
Favor tax support	48	40
Oppose	44	51
No opinion	8	9

The Public's Attitudes Toward Nonpublic Schools

In 1981, an increasing number of nonpublic schools posed a threat to the public schools, in the opinion of many educators. They argued that the nonpublic schools would attract better students, chiefly from the better-educated and upper-income families, and that the public schools would be left with most of the problem students.

Two questions were asked to gain insight into what people of the nation thought about this issue. First, respondents were asked why they thought the number of nonpublic schools had increased in recent years. The second question asked how they themselves felt about this increase in nonpublic schools: Was it a good thing or a bad thing?

The first question and the findings:

In recent years the number of nonpublic schools, that is, private and church-related schools, has increased in many parts of the nation. Why do you think this has happened?

Answers to this "open" question elicited these responses, listed in order of mention:

1. Poor educational standards in the public schools. Education in nonpublic schools is superior.
2. Integration/forced busing/racial problems.
3. Greater discipline is found in nonpublic schools.
4. More attention is given to religion in nonpublic schools.
5. Too many drug and alcohol problems in the public schools.
6. Overcrowding in the public schools.

The second question and the findings:

In general, do you think this increase in nonpublic schools is a good thing or a bad thing for the nation?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Increase in nonpublic schools is a good thing	49	49	44	63
Is a bad thing	30	28	36	23
No opinion	21	23	20	14

The more complete breakdowns that follow show that in the South, the section of the nation that probably had the greatest experience with nonpublic schools, opinion was almost evenly divided on whether the increase in the number of nonpublic schools was a good or a bad thing for the nation.

Further breakdowns:

	Attitudes Toward Increase in Nonpublic Schools		
	Good Thing %	Bad Thing %	No Opinion %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**49**	**30**	**21**
Sex			
Men	48	32	20
Women	49	28	23
Race			
White	49	30	21
Nonwhite	46	29	25
Age			
18 to 29 years	52	29	19
30 to 49 years	46	31	23
50 years and over	48	30	22
Community size			
1 million and over	48	27	25
500,000 — 999,999	49	29	22
50,000 — 499,999	53	30	17
2,500 — 49,999	50	30	20
Under 2,500	44	32	24
Central cities	51	28	21
Education			
Grade school	46	27	27
High school	48	30	22
College	50	32	18
Region			
East	49	29	22
Midwest	56	21	23
South	38	39	23
West	52	30	18

Teachers' Salaries

In 1981, the weight of public opinion seemed to be that teachers' salaries were too low. Although a plurality (41%) said that teachers' salaries were about right, 29% held that they were too low, as compared to only 10% who said that they were too high.

Teachers' salaries had increased substantially since the question of how much teachers should be paid was first asked in this series. In 1969, 43% thought salaries were about right, 33% said they were too low, and 2% said they were too high.

Those who had been out of school or college the shortest time – people 18 to 29 years of age – were most likely to feel that teachers were underpaid. In this age group, 42% said that teachers' salaries were too low – a view that helped explain why so many people had decided against entering the teaching profession.

Persons with a college education and residents of the South, where salaries tended to be lower than in other regions of the nation, were most inclined to say that salaries were too low.

The question and the findings:

Do you think salaries in this community for teachers are too high, too low, or about right?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Salaries too high	10	11	6	9
Salaries too low	29	28	31	39
About right	41	39	46	39
No opinion	20	22	17	13

Seniority Rights for Teachers

Performance in teaching is always hard to judge, yet in 1981 this was the standard that the public believed should be followed instead of seniority, when teachers had to be laid off to save money in a school system.

By an overwhelming majority, the public favored performance over seniority, a view consistent with the public's attitudes toward tenure.

Every major group in the population voted heavily against seniority – even those who were themselves over the age of 50.

The question and the findings:

If teachers must be laid off to save money in a school system, do you believe that those who are to be kept should be chosen on the basis of performance or on the basis of seniority?

	Seniority Rights for Teachers			
	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Teachers should be kept on basis of performance	78	77	80	89
Kept on basis of seniority	17	17	18	8
No opinion	5	6	2	3

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parents who had attended college and parents whose children were in the top half of their class were more likely to take advantage of conferences with their children's teachers

than those with lesser education and parents whose children were in the lower half of their class, according to 1981 poll findings. Parents with children attending school were asked if they had discussed their (eldest) child's progress or problems at any time since the beginning of the school year and the number of times they had held such meetings. Parents were also asked if they thought the teacher(s) in these conferences seemed to be interested in discussing their child's schoolwork or behavior.

Since parents and teachers are more likely to hold such meetings when children are in elementary school than when they are in high school, the results were tabulated in two categories: children under 13 years of age and those 13 and older.

The question:

Thinking about your eldest child, have you at any time since the beginning of the school year discussed your child's progress or problems with any of your child's teachers?

Results in the survey show that 83% of the parents whose eldest child was 12 years of age or younger had discussed the child's progress or behavior with the child's teachers. This compares with 79% who answered the same question in the 1977 survey. For children 13 years of age and older the figure obtained in the 1981 study was 55% – exactly the same percentage found in 1977.

The second question and the findings:

About how often since the beginning of the school year have you had discussions with your (eldest) child's teachers?

Number of Parent/Teacher Conferences Since the Beginning of School Year	Children 12 Years and Under %	Children 13 Years and Older %
One meeting	18	28
Two meetings	39	32
Three meetings	17	17
Four or five meetings	15	8
Six or more	10	14
Can't recall/no answer	1	1

On the question of teacher interest there was wide agreement. Parents said they believed the teachers *were* interested and, in a sense, invited such meetings with parents.

The question and the findings:

Thinking about the last time you spoke with your (eldest) child's teacher or teachers, did you feel that they were interested in discussing your child's work or behavior with you?

Reaction to Parent/ Teacher Meetings	All Parents Having Meeting With Teacher(s) %	Education of Parents Grade School %	High School %	College %
Teachers were interested	80	69	80	85
Were not interested	7	12	6	9
Don't know	13	19	14	6

Time Limits on Television Viewing During School Week

A question included in the 1977 survey about limiting TV viewing was repeated in 1981, with very similar findings. The question, asked of parents, follows:

Do you place a definite limit on the amount of time your eldest child spends viewing television during the school week?

The results of the 1981 survey compared with the 1977 findings:

	Parents Place Limit on TV Viewing %	Parents Do *Not* Place Limit %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
1977 survey	35	60	5
1981 survey	36	57	7

Parents are much more likely to place a limit on television viewing when their eldest child is 12 years of age or under.

	Parents Whose Eldest Child Is 12 Years and Under %	Parents Whose Eldest Child Is 13 Years and Over %
Parents place a definite time limit on viewing	51	27
No, do not	48	72
Don't know/ no answer	1	1

Although it is impossible to establish cause-and-effect relationships in a survey such as this, it is interesting to note that parents of children who were in the upper half of their class were more likely to impose limits on their children's television viewing than parents of children in the lower half of their class.

	Impose Limits on TV Viewing %	Do Not Impose Limits %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Parents of child in upper half of class	41	58	1
Parents of child in lower half of class	34	64	2

Help with Homework

Children in elementary school are helped much more often with their homework than are older children, according to 1981 poll findings. In fact, six in 10 of the parents of children 13 years of age and older said that they did not help with the homework of their children in this older age group. By contrast, only two in 10 said that they did not help their younger children.

When comparisons are made with the 1977 survey, when this same question was asked of parents with children in school, a gain appears in the percentage of those who say they help their children (those 12 years of age and under) regularly with their homework.

Should Child-Care Centers Be Made Part of the Public School System?

In 1981, the nation was fairly evenly divided on the idea of making child-care centers available for all preschool children as part of the public school system. No statistically significant change had occurred since 1976, when this question was last asked.

The question and the findings:

A proposal has been made to make child-care centers available for all preschool children as part of the public school system. This program would be supported by taxes. Would you favor or oppose such a program in your school district?

	Favor %	Oppose %	No Opinion %
1976 survey	46	49	5
1981 survey	46	47	7

Women favored this proposal more than men by a margin of 49% to 42%. The 18-to-29 age group – the group most concerned – voted in favor of the proposal by a margin of 64% to 32%. The age group 50 and over opposed the proposal, 55% to 36%. Nonwhites favored the plan by a margin of 66% to 25%; whites opposed it, 51% to 42%.

Further breakdowns:

	Child-Care Centers as Part of the Public School System		
	Favor %	Oppose %	No Opinion %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**46**	**47**	**7**
Sex			
Men	42	50	8
Women	49	45	6
Race			
White	42	51	7
Nonwhite	66	25	9
Age			
18 to 29 years	64	32	4
30 to 49 years	41	52	7
50 years and over	36	55	9
Community size			
1 million and over	56	38	6
500,000 — 999,999	55	39	6
50,000 — 499,999	42	49	9
2,500 — 49,999	38	55	7
Under 2,500	41	53	6
Central cities	52	40	8
Education			
Grade school	43	45	12
High school	47	46	7
College	43	52	5
Region			
East	48	42	10
Midwest	37	58	5
South	52	41	7
West	45	48	7

Should Parents of Preschool Children Pay Some of the Costs of Child-Care Centers?

The public believed that parents should pay part of the costs if their children participated in child-care centers – if and when child-care centers should become part of the public school system.

Gallup said:

> Undoubtedly the proposal to make such centers part of the public school system would gain supporters if some of the tax costs were borne by parents whose children participated.
>
> More than eight in 10 persons agreed that parents should bear part of the costs of these child-care centers – even the age group that would make the greatest use of such child-care centers, those 18 to 29 years of age.

No major group in the population held a different view from that of the nation as a whole.

The question and the findings:

Should the parents of preschool children participating in such a program be required to pay some of the costs for this day care?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Parents should pay some of the costs of child-care centers	83	82	85	87
Parents should not	10	10	10	7
No opinion	7	8	5	6

A U.S. Department of Education

Gallup said:

> To a marked degree, the question of retaining a Department of Education in the federal government is a political issue. President Reagan has insisted that such a department is not needed and that its functions could be performed by a smaller agency or by other departments of the government. The nation agrees with the President's position by a margin of 49% to 29%. A high percentage of persons (22%) have no opinion on this question, however.
>
> The strongly political nature of the issue can be seen from the fact that individuals who identify themselves as Republicans vote 62% to 20% with the Administration in holding that a federal Department of Education is not needed, while the vote of persons who say they are Democrats is much more evenly divided (40% agreeing, 36% disagreeing).

The question and the findings:

Two years ago a new Department of Education was established in the federal government in Washington, D.C. The present Administration now says such a department is not needed and that its functions should be performed by a smaller agency or by other departments of the government. Do you agree or disagree with this view?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Agree that Department of Education is not needed	49	50	48	49
Disagree	29	27	32	34
No opinion	22	23	20	17

Chapter 15
The Fourteenth Annual Poll, 1982

Events of the Year in Education

A computer in every school building, a computer in every classroom, a computer on every student's desk, homework requiring a computer on the kitchen or living room table, a school curriculum geared to computerized information. Things appeared to be headed in those directions in 1982 as American educators became increasingly intrigued with the computer.

Students often took the lead in the computerization of their schooling. Many youngsters knew more about the machine than their teachers and willingly spent extra hours, at school and at home, pushing buttons, setting up problems, and programming solutions. Offhandedly, they used such terms as "alphanumeric," "modem," "byte," and "chip."

In curriculum, administrative, and business offices, meanwhile, educators were at work putting the computer to use for enhancing instruction and for steamlining statistical and administrative tasks.

Experts in many disciplines – science, mathematics, English, social studies – predicted that the computer would be a creative force in teaching.

Companies manufacturing computers saw a multi-billion-dollar school market ahead and their representatives predicted that "a tidal wave would soon sweep computers into every level of the educational establishment." Congress, infected by computer media, considered the Technology Education Act of 1982; its primary purpose was to help schools acquire computers in large numbers. But by the end of the year, the measure was dormant.

Not hardware but software was the real problem for schools being swept into the computer age. How shall schools get the course offerings for computer use? Shall these be manufactured by commercial producers of instructional materials? If so, can educators influence the companies making the software? Or shall school districts produce their own software? But do many school systems have the resources and know-how to develop their own?

Such were the questions of 1982, and they were largely unanswered. But that did not slow the rush of school officials toward the computer. Enthusiasts for the device often installed computers in schools without training teachers to use them or determining their purpose. Those who called for a slow down of the rush to computers were not popular in education in 1982.

The concept of the effective school captured the interest of large numbers of school boards and their superintendents. From New London to Seattle, from Chicago to Tulsa, public schools began to put to work the ideas developed and popularized by Ron Edmonds and his colleagues.

Effective schools principles were first proposed (1970) for urban schools and ghetto students. But the notion soon spread that what is good for the ghetto may be good for any school. Districts of all types, sizes, and wealth started to apply the principles. A count in 1982 by its proponents showed that close to 1,000 schools had put those principles into effect. What is an effective school? It is a school characterized by *all* of the following characteristics: 1) a safe and orderly environment; 2) a clear school mission; 3) instructional leadership by a committed principal; 4) high expectations of students, accompanied by a belief on the part of teachers that all students can master basic skills; 5) insistence by teachers that students spend time on classroom tasks without interruption; 6) frequent monitoring of student progress through teacher-made tests; and 7) active involvement of parents in school activities.

Administrators experienced with effective schools principles claimed that they helped reduce discipline problems, encouraged high student achievement and self-esteem, and raised teacher morale.

Deficiencies that plagued mathematics instruction (see summary for 1981) also plagued science instruction: low student achievement, a shortage of qualified teachers (especially at the secondary level), and a low number of years in science required for graduation (even lower than those for math, only 2.2 years). To these, science specialists added another shortcoming: Most school systems allow little time for science instruction in the early grades because they mistakenly think elementary science is a frill.

In 1982, however, science educators spoke out against a major flaw in science education: weak and wobbling course offerings from elementary grades through high school.

Science offerings in the elementary grades were of poor quality because most elementary teachers "don't know enough science and don't know how to teach what they do know." Science instruction, the experts said, should stress investigation, problem-solving, experimentation, questioning, searching for new facts, exploring the unknown. Elementary teachers do not feel secure with such challenges. They feel more comfortable with presenting known facts and asking students to memorize and recite them. The result, science educators said, is science periods marked by dull and mundane information that chills the inherent curiosity of young students.

Science offerings at the secondary levels also were characterized by presentation of facts, definitions, and principles as if they are immutable. The main flaw in secondary science, however, was a shortage of laboratories where students "can experiment, solve problems, and pursue the unknown." This

was especially true in rural and small schools. Science labs are expensive to install and maintain, and some school districts combined their resources to make available laboratories on a shared basis.

Even as educators in 1982 bemoaned the shortcomings of science instruction, they pointed to actions taken by school systems to improve it. These included:

- Continuous curriculum revision of elementary and secondary science to eliminate old material, make room for new content, and stress hands-on and laboratory experiences.
- Adoption of modernized textbooks and instructional materials, including visual and auditory devices.
- Appointment of resource specialists to help elementary teachers.
- Adoption of policies to encourage teachers to use the resources of the community, outdoors, business, and industry.
- Expansion of inservice sessions for elementary teachers, stressing use of the computer in science instruction.
- Adoption of policies to encourage secondary science teachers to attend college workshops, seminars, and short courses in science.

Poll Findings

Questions about the contribution of education to success, personal and national, were asked in the 1982 poll. In their answers the public again expressed the overwhelming conviction that education is basic to most of what people accomplish, personally and collectively.

Education's Contribution to Success

Gallup said:

> The drop in enrollment in many colleges and universities has prompted the question of whether America's commitment to education is as strong today as it was a few years ago. The answer, clearly, is that the public has not changed its opinion about education. Four of every five persons interviewed in this year's survey said that education is extremely important to one's future success. In fact, there has been no statistically significant change in recent years. And every major group in the population – rich and poor, old and young, well educated and poorly educated – agrees on the importance of education.

The question and the findings:

How important are schools to one's future success — extremely important, fairly important, or not too important?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Extremely important	80	78	85	83
Fairly important	18	20	13	16
Not too important	1	1	2	-
No opinion	1	1	-	1

National Totals

	Extremely Important %	Fairly Important %	Not Too Important %	No Opinion %
1982 results	80	18	1	1
1980 results	82	15	2	1
1973 results	76	19	4	1

Further breakdowns:

	Extremely Important %	Fairly Important %	Not Too Important %	No Opinion %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**80**	**18**	**1**	**1**
Sex				
Men	76	21	2	1
Women	84	14	1	1
Race				
White	79	19	1	1
Nonwhite	85	13	*	2
Age				
18 to 29 years	77	21	1	1
30 to 49 years	82	16	2	*
50 years and over	80	17	1	2
Community size				
1 million and over	81	17	1	1
500,000 — 999,999	82	16	2	*
50,000 — 499,999	81	17	1	1
2,500 — 49,999	83	14	2	1
Under 2,500	75	22	2	1
Central City	81	17	1	1
Education				
Grade school	77	18	2	3
High school	82	16	2	*
College	78	20	1	1
Region				
East	79	19	1	1
Midwest	81	17	1	1
South	80	17	2	1
West	79	19	2	-

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Education and America's Future

Faith in America's future, in the opinion of those sampled in the 1982 survey, rests more on developing the best educational system in the world than on developing the best industrial system or the strongest military force.

An amazing amount of agreement was found on this question. Every major group in the population placed education first, our industrial system second, and military strength third in the importance assigned to each in determining America's future place in the world.

The question:

In determining America's strength in the future — say, 25 years from now — how important do you feel each of the following factors will be — very important, fairly important, not too important, or not at all important?

	National Totals				
	Very Important %	Fairly Important %	Not Too Important %	Not At All Important %	Don't Know %
1. Developing the best educational system in the world	84	13	1	*	2
2. Developing the most efficient industrial production system in the world	66	26	3	1	4
3. Building the strongest military force in the world	47	37	11	2	3

*Less than one-half of 1%.

1982 Rating of the Public Schools

How good are the institutional instruments that provide this all-important education? Again in 1982, the public was ambivalent. As in every year since 1976, about one-third of those questioned gave the schools high ratings (A or B), while one-sixth to one-fifth gave a rating of D or F. The same patterns of recent years also held when the ratings of subgroups were examined. Those with no children in the public schools tended to give lower ratings than did those with children in school. Young adults tended to give lower ratings than older persons. Residents of small communities rated their schools higher than inhabitants of large cities.

The question and the findings:

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	Rating of the Public Schools					
By Parents with:	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
Children in public schools	11	38	31	13	6	1
Children in nonpublic schools	13	25	39	13	9	1
No children in school	7	25	34	14	5	15

Further breakdowns:

	Rating of the Local Public Schools					
	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**8**	**29**	**33**	**14**	**5**	**11**
Sex						
Men	8	29	35	13	5	10
Women	8	29	32	14	6	11
Race						
White	8	31	33	13	4	11
Nonwhite	11	17	33	16	11	12
Age						
18 to 29 years	4	23	44	17	2	10
30 to 49 years	8	34	30	14	7	7
50 years and over	11	29	28	11	6	15
Community size						
1 million and over	7	25	32	19	6	11
500,000 — 999,999	4	29	37	16	7	7
50,000 — 499,999	6	26	39	15	5	9
2,500 — 49,999	12	38	26	8	6	10
Under 2,500	11	28	31	12	4	14
Central City	4	20	37	22	8	9
Education						
Grade school	16	17	30	11	5	21
High school	7	29	35	15	5	9
College	6	33	32	13	6	10
Region						
East	8	29	36	13	6	8
Midwest	9	36	29	13	4	9
South	9	22	33	14	5	17
West	6	26	37	17	6	8

Rating of Public Schools Nationally

Gallup said:

> Citizens rate their own schools higher than they rate the public schools nationally. Since parents with children attending the public schools give the public schools higher ratings than do those who have no children in school, the conclusion can be drawn that those who know most about the schools hold a better opinion of them than do those who do not have firsthand knowledge. The public schools, as an American institution, have an image problem.

The question and the findings:

How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
Public schools in this community	8	29	33	14	5	11
Public schools in the nation	2	20	44	15	4	15

	Public Schools in the Nation			
	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A rating	2	2	3	-
B rating	20	20	20	21
C rating	44	44	44	48
D rating	15	15	15	15
FAIL	4	3	5	2
Don't know	15	16	13	14

Major Problem Confronting the Public Schools

"Lack of discipline" again headed the list of major problems confronting the public schools in 1982. The problem that gained most in mentions since the 1981 survey, however, was "lack of proper financial support." In 1981 a total of 12% of those interviewed cited this as a major problem; in 1982, 22% mentioned it.

Because many educators had asked for more information on just what people have in mind when they cite discipline as a major problem, two additional questions were included in the 1982 survey to shed light on the public's perceptions. These are reported below.

The American public continued to regard the use of drugs as a major problem; the number of mentions rose from 15% to 20% between 1981 and 1982. A significant increase was recorded in the number of parents of schoolchildren who cited use of drugs as a major problem.

The questions and the findings:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the *public* schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Lack of discipline	27	27	26	25
Lack of proper financial support	22	21	26	18
Use of drugs	20	20	20	19
Poor curriculum/poor standards	11	13	11	12
Difficulty getting good teachers	10	9	11	8
Teachers' lack of interest	7	6	9	10
Integration/busing (combined)	6	7	5	10
Pupils' lack of interest/truancy	5	5	4	4
Parents' lack of interest	5	4	5	7
Large schools/ overcrowding	4	5	4	2
Mismanagement of funds	3	3	3	6
Crime/vandalism	3	3	2	2
Drinking/alcoholism	3	3	3	2
Lack of respect for teachers/other students	2	2	2	3
Lack of needed teachers	2	2	2	1
Moral standards	2	2	1	7
Lack of proper facilities	2	1	3	-
Problems with administration	2	1	2	2
Too many schools/declining enrollment	2	1	2	4
Transportation	1	1	1	2
School board policies	1	1	1	2
Communication problems	1	1	2	1
Teachers' strikes	1	1	1	-
Fighting	1	1	2	2
Non-English-speaking students	1	1	*	-
Government interference	1	*	1	1
There are no problems	1	1	3	2
Miscellaneous	2	2	4	1
Don't know/ no answer	11	14	3	6

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)
*Less than one-half of 1%.

Probing the Discipline Problem

In every year but one since the poll was started in 1969, the public identified discipline as the top problem of their local schools. A question was framed for the 1982 poll to discover just how serious people regard the discipline problem. The findings reveal that approximately seven persons in 10 regarded discipline as "very serious" or "fairly serious." Only two in 10 regarded it as "not too serious." Significantly, parents of school children – presumably those in the best position to know – held virtually the same views as the general public.

The question and the findings:

How serious a problem would you say discipline is in the public schools in this community — very serious, fairly serious, not too serious, or not at all serious?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Very serious	39	39	37	46
Fairly serious	31	31	32	31
Not too serious	20	18	25	18
Not at all serious	2	2	4	2
Don't know	8	10	2	3

Further breakdowns:

	Very Serious	Fairly Serious	Not Too Serious	Not At All Serious	Don't Know
	%	%	%	%	%
NATIONAL TOTALS	**39**	**31**	**20**	**2**	**8**
Sex					
Men	39	31	21	2	7
Women	39	32	18	3	8
Race					
White	37	31	22	2	8
Nonwhite	50	31	10	2	7
Age					
18 to 29 years	36	38	19	2	5
30 to 49 years	40	30	22	3	5
50 years and over	40	28	19	1	12

	Very Serious %	Fairly Serious %	Not Too Serious %	Not At All Serious %	Don't Know %
Community size					
1 million and over	49	23	15	3	10
500,000 — 999,999	42	35	16	1	6
50,000 — 499,999	44	32	17	1	6
2,500 — 49,999	33	35	19	2	11
Under 2,500	29	32	28	3	8
Central City	52	28	13	1	6
Education					
Grade school	36	21	24	3	16
High school	41	32	19	2	6
College	37	35	19	2	7
Region					
East	39	31	21	3	6
Midwest	31	35	25	2	7
South	41	31	14	2	12
West	45	27	21	2	5

What Are the Elements of the Discipline Problem?

Studies indicate that school administrators differ from the general public in their understanding of discipline. They are more likely to think of discipline problems as absenteeism, vandalism, and similar behavior. The general public, however, tends to associate discipline with observance of rules and regulations and respect for authority.

In the 1972 survey, respondents, when asked to choose from a list of nine goals of education cited "teaching students to respect law and authority" as the top goal for students in grades 7 through 12.

The 1982 question:

When we talk about "discipline" in the schools, just what does this mean to you?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Obeying rules/regulations	54	55	50	44
Authority/control by teachers	31	29	35	48
Respect for teachers	18	17	20	24
Students' lack of willingness to learn	7	7	6	7
Fighting/violence	3	3	3	1
Smoking/drugs	2	2	1	1
Miscellaneous	1	*	3	1
Don't know	5	6	4	1

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)
*Less than one-half of 1%.

What Do Children Like About the Schools They Attend?

When parents were asked what their children like best about the schools they attend, the answer given most often was "the teachers." Answers differed somewhat depending on whether the children were enrolled in the public schools or in nonpublic schools. In the case of parents whose children attended nonpublic schools, the answer given most often was "the joy of learning."

High on the list of things that students in both types of schools were reported to like are "friends," "sports," "the social program," and "the library." Many parents, of course, mentioned specific subjects such as mathematics, science, and industrial arts.

The question and the findings:

What is the main thing that *your eldest child* likes about the school he/she attends?

	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Teachers	17	18
Friends	16	14
Sports	13	11
Enjoys learning	13	21
Social program	11	3
Using the library	7	6
Curriculum	6	4
Math	6	1
Art	4	5
Band/choir	4	-
Science class	4	4
Feeling of accomplishment	4	6
Industrial arts	2	-
Miscellaneous	9	12
Don't know	9	14
Doesn't like school	5	6

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

What Do Parents Like Best About the Schools Their Children Attend?

When the same parents were asked what *they* like best about the schools their children attend, the answer given most often was "quality of education." This answer came much more frequently from parents whose children were enrolled in nonpublic schools than from those whose children attended public schools.

Parents of children attending nonpublic schools were much more likely to cite "discipline," "the teaching of moral values," and "the quality of education" as things they like best than were parents whose children attended the public schools.

The question and the findings:

And what is the main thing that *you* like about it [the school he/she attends]?

	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Quality of education	13	25
Teachers' interest	11	14
Curriculum	11	8
Children are learning	10	11
Qualified teachers	10	5
Faculty are nice	7	3

	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Location	7	5
Parents kept informated	4	7
Discipline	4	20
Teacher/child relationship	3	6
Students are motivated	3	4
Morals/values taught	1	10
Extracurricular activities	3	2
Emphasis on the basics	1	1
Classroom size	1	2
Miscellaneous	3	4
Don't know	10	8

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

Where Should Savings Be Made in the School Budget?

With tax revenues from all levels of government sharply curtailed and with costs spiraling in the recession months of 1981 and 1982, school boards were faced with a continuing problem of where to save money. Here the views of the public were important but not necessarily compelling, since, as Gallup observed, the public probably does not know as much as educators about how best to meet educational goals and requirements.

Questions dealing with schools' costs and savings were included in three of the annual surveys in this series: in 1971, 1976, and 1982.

The public's views showed little change since 1971. As pointed out in the 1971 report, the public is reluctant to suggest drastic cost cutting for the schools. Strongest support was found for cutting administrative personnel. Gallup said, "This reaction on the part of the public is undoubtedly a generalized one that springs from the belief that all institutions are subject to Parkinson's Law and acquire unneeded personnel unless halted."

The question and the findings:

Suppose your local school board were "forced" to cut some things from school costs because there is not enough money. I am going to read you a list of many ways that have been suggested for reducing school costs. Will you tell me, in the case of each one, whether your opinion is favorable or unfavorable?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
1. Reduce the number of administrative personnel				
Favorable	71	71	71	72
Unfavorable	22	21	25	26
No opinion	7	8	4	2
2. Reduce the number of counselors on the staff				
Favorable	49	48	51	50
Unfavorable	42	40	44	47
No opinion	9	12	5	3
3. Reduce the number of subjects offered				
Favorable	35	34	38	37
Unfavorable	58	57	57	57
No opinion	7	9	5	6
4. Cut out the 12th grade by covering in three years what is now covered in four				
Favorable	31	32	29	25
Unfavorable	62	60	67	68
No opinion	7	8	4	7
5. Cut out after-school activities such as bands, clubs, athletics, etc.				
Favorable	29	28	33	26
Unfavorable	64	65	63	70
No opinion	7	7	4	4
6. Reduce the number of teachers by increasing class sizes				
Favorable	18	20	13	29
Unfavorable	76	73	84	69
No opinion	6	7	3	2
7. Cut all teachers' salaries by a set percentage				
Favorable	17	18	15	14
Unfavorable	76	74	81	80
No opinion	7	8	4	6
8. Reduce special services such as speech, reading, and hearing therapy				
Favorable	11	13	9	7
Unfavorable	83	80	88	91
No opinion	6	7	3	2
9. Reduce instruction in the basics — reading, writing, and arithmetic				
Favorable	3	3	2	3
Unfavorable	93	92	96	95
No opinion	4	5	2	2

Federal Funds for Education

Gallup said:

> If Congress listened to the American people, public school education would receive far more money from the federal government than it now does.
>
> Seven years ago, in the 1975 survey, respondents were asked how federal funds should be distributed if and when more federal money became available. Health care headed the list in that survey with 18% of the first choices; a total of 53% ranked health care either first, second, or third. Public school education ranked second among the 11 areas listed on the card that was handed to respondents. Public school education received 16% of the first choices and 48% of first, second, and third choices combined.

In this year's survey, when the same list of needs was handed to respondents and the same question asked, public school education topped the list with 21% of the first choices and with a combined vote of 55%. Health care received almost exactly the same number of choices as it did in the 1975 survey.

Military defense ranked fourth in this year's survey; it placed eighth in the 1975 study.

The question and the findings:

If and when more federal money from Washington is available, which *one* of the areas on this card do you think should be given first consideration when these funds are distributed? And which *one* of these areas do you think should be given second consideration? And which *one* of these areas do you think should be given third consideration?

	National Totals			
1982 Results	**First Choice**	**Second Choice**	**Third Choice**	**Combined Choices**
	%	%	%	%
Public school education	21	17	17	55
Health care	19	19	15	53
Welfare and aid to poor	16	15	11	42
Military defense	14	9	10	33
Law enforcement	8	11	13	32
Public housing	8	9	10	27
Pollution/conservation	5	7*	6	18
Agricultural aid	3	4	6	13
Mass transit	2	3	4	9
Highway improvement	1	3	3	7
Foreign aid	1	1	1	3
No opinion	2	2	4	8

Federal Influence on the Educational Program

Gallup said:

In most nations the central government determines the educational program for the whole country. The United States represents an important exception to this rule. And, judging from the findings of this year's survey, a majority of U.S. citizens would like the federal government to have even less influence in the future.

Although all major groups in the population take this same position, some groups would like to have the federal government play a more important role in setting programs to be followed by local schools. Nonwhites would like the federal government to have more influence on educational programs, and, generally speaking, those who hold liberal political views are inclined to be more receptive to federal control than those who hold conservative political views.

The question and the findings:

Thinking about the future, would you like the federal government in Washington to have more influence, or less influence, in determining the educational program of the local public schools?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
More influence	28	28	29	28
Less influence	54	51	60	63
Same as now	10	12	5	4
Don't know	8	9	6	5

Further breakdowns:

	More Influence	Less Influence	Same As Now	Don't Know
	%	%	%	%
NATIONAL TOTALS	**28**	**54**	**10**	**8**
Sex				
Men	27	57	10	6
Women	29	52	10	9
Race				
White	24	60	10	6
Nonwhite	51	26	9	14
Age				
18 to 29 years	40	47	8	5
30 to 49 years	27	58	8	7
50 years and over	20	56	13	11
Community size				
1 million and over	31	37	19	13
500,000 — 999,999	32	58	6	4
50,000 — 499,999	33	53	8	6
2,500 — 49,999	26	60	11	3
Under 2,500	22	61	7	10
Central City	39	44	9	8
Education				
Grade school	29	39	12	20
High school	31	52	10	7
College	22	65	9	4
Region				
East	32	45	13	10
Midwest	24	61	9	6
South	32	51	8	9
West	23	64	8	5

Appropriating Funds for Special Instruction of Students with Learning Problems and the Gifted and Talented

Gallup said:

Arguments can be advanced for devoting special efforts to help students at both extremes of the scale of scholastic ability — those who have learning problems and those who are gifted and talented. Judging from the responses to questions asked about each of these two groups of students, the American public would apparently prefer to spend more school funds helping those with learning problems than those who are gifted and talented. In both cases, however, the largest percentage of persons in the survey say that the same amount of money should be spent on each of these groups as is spent on "average" students.

Respondents who have a college education are more likely to favor special instruction and programs for gifted children and less likely than others to favor special instruction for those who have learning problems. In both instances, however, a majority of the college-educated respondents favor spending the same amount on each of these groups as is spent on average students.

The first question and the findings:

How do you feel about the spending of public school funds for special instruction and homework programs for students with *learning problems*? Do you feel that more public school funds should be spent on students with learning problems than on average students — or the same amount?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
More spent	42	41	47	29
Same amount spent	48	47	48	60
Less spent	4	4	3	7
Don't know	6	8	2	4

The second question and the findings:

How do you feel about the spending of public school funds for special instruction and homework programs for *gifted and talented students*? Do you feel that more school funds should be spent on gifted and talented students than on average students — or the same amount?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
More spent	19	18	21	17
Same amount spent	64	64	63	72
Less spent	11	10	13	7
Don't know	6	8	3	4

Extending the Time Spent in School

Gallup said:

> Although a majority of persons hold deep-seated convictions about the importance of education to the future of young people and to the nation itself, they oppose lengthening the school year by one month or extending the school day by one hour.
>
> A difference is found, however, between the views of residents of large cities and those who live in smaller cities and towns. In fact, sentiment favorable to spending more time in school increases as the size of the city grows. In cities whose population is one million and over, a majority of those respondents who expressed an opinion favor extending the school year and the school day. The reverse is true of those who live in small cities and towns. One obvious reason for this phenomenon is that many young people in our larger cities have nothing to do when they are out of school, whereas young people in the smaller cities and rural communities tend to be occupied with chores.
>
> Attitudes toward spending more time in school could change if it is proved that industrial nations such as Japan and West Germany – or the Soviet Union – are gaining a marked advantage over the U.S. by following this policy.

The first question and the findings:

In some nations, students attend school as many as 240 days a year as compared to about 180 days in the U.S. How do you feel about extending the public school year in this community by 30 days, making the school year about 210 days or 10 months long. Do you favor or oppose this idea?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	37	36	38	36
Oppose	53	52	56	56
Don't know	10	12	6	8

Further breakdowns:

	Extending the School Year		
	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**37**	**53**	**10**
Sex			
Men	39	53	8
Women	35	54	11
Race			
White	36	55	9
Nonwhite	42	44	14
Age			
18 to 29 years	30	63	7
30 to 49 years	39	54	7
50 years and over	40	46	14
Community size			
1 million and over	49	35	16
500,000 — 999,999	44	49	7
50,000 — 499,999	39	54	7
2,500 — 49,999	31	61	8
Under 2,500	27	63	10
Central City	44	45	11
Education			
Grade school	32	50	18
High school	35	57	8
College	43	49	8
Region			
East	39	52	9
Midwest	35	57	8
South	32	54	14
West	44	50	6

The second question and the findings:

How do you feel about extending the school *day* in the public schools in this community by one hour? Do you favor or oppose this idea?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	37	38	36	49
Oppose	55	52	61	46
Don't know	8	10	3	5

Further breakdowns:

	Extending the School Day		
	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**37**	**55**	**8**
Sex			
Men	38	54	8
Women	37	55	8
Race			
White	36	57	7
Nonwhite	44	43	13
Age			
18 to 29 years	33	62	5
30 to 49 years	39	54	7
50 years and over	39	49	12
Community size			
1 million and over	48	41	11
500,000 — 999,999	42	54	4
50,000 — 499,999	40	53	7
2,500 — 49,999	31	61	8
Under 2,500	29	62	9
Central City	41	50	9

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know %
Education			
Grade school	38	47	15
High school	33	59	8
College	45	49	6
Region			
East	37	54	9
Midwest	35	59	6
South	30	57	13
West	53	43	4

Curriculum Changes to Meet Today's Needs

When respondents were asked if they thought the school curriculum should be changed to meet today's needs, slightly more than one-third said yes. Those who thought that changes were needed were more likely to be persons in the young adult group (18 to 29 years of age), the college educated, those who live in the largest cities, and residents of Western states.

When the same question was asked in the 1970 survey, a slightly higher percentage said that they were satisfied with the curriculum. In the intervening years, the number of those who would like changes to be made rose from 31% to 36%.

Those who believed changes were needed were asked to tell what changes they would like to see. Heading the list, in the answers that relate directly to curriculum, was the need to give more emphasis to the basics. Next, in order of mention, was "more practical instruction," followed by "more vocational classes." A total of 8% offered the generalized comment, "raise academic standards."

Parents of children not enrolled in the public schools held views very similar to those of other groups in the population.

The question and the findings:

Do you think the school curriculum in your community needs to be changed to meet today's needs, or do you think it already meets today's needs?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
1982 Results	%	%	%	%
Needs to be changed	36	33	42	46
Already meets needs	42	38	50	44
No opinion	22	29	8	10
1970 Results				
Needs to be changed	31	31	33	28
Already meets needs	46	36	59	57
No opinion	23	33	8	15

Those who said that they thought the curriculum needs to be changed were asked the following question:

In what ways do you feel it needs to be changed?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
More emphasis on basics	26	26	27	29
More practical instruction	14	15	12	9
More vocational classes	11	13	10	5
Raise academic standards	8	8	7	7
Greater variety of classes	5	5	5	3
More computer courses	4	4	4	3
More math courses	3	2	6	7
More foreign language	3	3	4	2
Upgrade textbooks	3	3	4	-
Stress religion more	3	2	*	2
More English courses	2	2	2	7
More science courese	2	2	3	9
Remove sex education	1	1	1	2
More for gifted students	1	1	1	2
More arts	1	1	2	-
Better college preparation	1	1	2	-
Add health classes	1	1	-	-
Miscellaneous	5	5	6	11
Don't know	7	7	8	2

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)
*Less than one-half of 1%.

Selection of Books for School Use

In recent years many communities in the U.S. have been involved in controversies over the books that are selected for class use and for the school library. The question arises as to which group – teachers, parents, school administrators, or school boards – should have the most influence in the selection process.

Findings from the 1982 survey indicate that, if the public's views were followed, teachers would have the most influence. Parents, who are the ones who usually initiate legal action to remove books from school libraries, do not think that they themselves should have the most influence in book selection.

The question and the findings:

Who do you feel should have the most influence in the selection of books for use in public school classrooms and school libraries — the parents, the school board, the teachers, or the principals and school administrators?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Teachers	42	41	45	51
Parents	18	19	15	14
Principals and school administrators	15	14	16	17
School boards	13	13	13	8
Don't know	12	13	11	10

Parents' College Hopes and Plans for Their Children

The importance that parents attach to a college education is reflected in their hopes and plans for their children. In 1982, a total of 87% of all parents with children enrolled in the public schools said that they hoped their children would go on to college.

As Gallup notes, these were only hopes. When parents were asked (in the case of their eldest child) whether he or she would actually attend college, the figure dropped to 57% in the case of public school parents. For parents of children who attended nonpublic schools, the comparable figure was 67%.

Gallup observed that the increasing cost of a college education would almost certainly reduce further the number actually entering college unless a vigorous campaign were waged to induce students to continue their education beyond high school.

When parents were asked why they wanted their children to go to college, better job opportunities and a better income far outweighed other reasons. The nonfinancial, nonmaterialistic reasons for continuing one's education had obviously not influenced the thinking of most Americans.

The first question and the findings:

Would you like to have your eldest child go on to college after graduating from high school?

	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	87	84
No	5	6
Don't know	8	10

Reasons Offered for Attending College

More job opportunities/better income	48%
Need more education today to cope with problems	27
Have a better life	20
College allows more time to mature	4
Miscellaneous	11

(Total equals more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

The second question and the findings:

Do you think he/she *will* go to college?

	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	57	67
No	19	15
Don't know	24	18

Private Schools Versus Public Schools

A question in the 1982 survey asked parents of children enrolled in the public schools which they would prefer, public schools or private schools, if the private schools were tuition free.

The findings indicate that nearly half of those who then sent their children to public schools would have chosen private schools under the conditions specified.

Those parents who selected the private schools over the public schools were asked to explain their choice. The reason offered most often was that private schools have a "higher standard of education." "Discipline" received the next highest number of mentions, followed by "individual attention," "smaller class size," "better curriculum," and "better quality of teachers."

The question:

Suppose you could send your eldest child to a private school, tuition free. Which would you prefer — to send him or her to a private school or to a public school?

	Public School Parents %
Private school	45
Public school	47
Don't know	8

Why do you say that?

Reasons for preferring private school	Public School Parents %
Higher standards of education	28
Better discipline	27
More individual attention	21
Smaller class size	17
Better curriculum	12
Quality of teachers	11
Religious/moral reasons	5
Parents have more input	3
Miscellaneous	10
Don't know	1

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

At the time this question was asked, Congress was considering proposals that would have given parents tuition tax credits if they sent their children to private schools. Had any of the proposals been enacted into law, important changes would have occurred in both public and private education. In reporting the above findings, the *Kappan* editor was careful to note that no tuition tax credit proposal before Congress guaranteed *free* tuition. Hence answers should not be construed as supporting the tax credit idea. It seems likely that many respondents, in indicating a preference for private schools, had in mind elite, expensive schools not realistically available to them under any of the tax credit proposals.

Teacher Burnout

In education circles of the early Eighties, "burnout" was offered as the reason why so many teachers were leaving the profession. The committee that selected questions to be

included in the 1982 survey thought it would be enlightening to discover the *public's* views as to why this was happening. Nine reasons were presented on a card, and respondents were asked to select three of them.

The reason selected by the greatest number of respondents was "discipline problems in the schools." The reason elected by the next highest number of respondents was "low teacher salaries." The most instructive answers should come from parents of children attending school. Discipline ranked even higher with this group than with those who had no children attending school. Otherwise, opinions across subgroups were very much the same.

The question and the findings:

Public school teachers are leaving the classroom in great numbers. Here are some reasons that are sometimes given. Which *three* of these do you think are the main reasons why teachers are leaving their jobs?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Discipline problems in the schools	63	59	70	74
Low teacher salaries	52	49	59	53
Students are unmotivated/uninterested in school	37	39	31	40
Parents don't support teachers	37	37	39	35
Parents are not interested in children's progress	25	26	21	23
Lack of public financial support for education	24	23	27	17
Low standing of teaching as a profession	15	16	13	17
Difficulty of advancement	14	13	15	14
Outstanding teacher performance goes unrewarded	13	14	13	18
Don't know	4	5	2	2

Settling Teacher Strikes

In 1982, as in 1975, the public strongly supported compulsory arbitration as a way to settle teacher strikes.

Complete agreement existed on this point among all major groups in the population. The highest vote in favor of compulsory arbitration was recorded among individuals with a college education.

Results of the 1982 survey showed 79% in favor of compulsory arbitration. In 1975 the comparable figure was 84%. It should be noted that slightly more people say they have no opinion on this proposal in 1982 than did so in the 1975 study.

The question and the findings:

In case an agreement cannot be reached between a teacher union (or association) and the school board, would you favor or oppose a plan that would require the dispute to be settled by the decision of an arbitrator or a panel acceptable to both the union and school board?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	79	76	84	90
Oppose	7	8	6	5
Don't know	14	16	10	5

Chapter 16
The Fifteenth Annual Poll, 1983

Events of the Year in Education

Reform! Reform! This was the embattled cry of educators and lawmakers throughout the year. They issued learned reports, documents, and books to show why and how.

Twenty-seven major reports calling for change and improvement in the nation's schools and colleges were released by national commissions, foundations, and study groups. In addition, 112 state-level task forces prepared documents detailing the reforms needed in particular states and their school districts.

First (in date of release) and foremost (in influence) was *A Nation at Risk*, released in April by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. In preparation for more than two years by the U.S. Department of Education, this report immediately became front-page and prime-time news across the nation. Its influence persisted long after publication.

"We are a nation at risk," and "a rising tide of mediocrity" – two phrases from the report's preamble – passed into the language.

The report urged that high school graduation requirements be strengthened with the "Five New Basics": four years of English, three years of mathematics, three years of science, three years of social studies, and one-half year of computer science. The report also called for at least two years of foreign language. Other recommendations were:

- More adequate class time must be devoted to the Five New Basics by adopting a seven-hour school day and a 200- to 220-day school year.
- Schools must adopt more rigorous standards of student achievement and higher-than-ever expectations. Grades must be indicators of subject-matter mastery. Four-year colleges and universities must raise their admissions requirements.
- The preparation of teachers must be improved and those already on the job must be rewarded more adequately.

With unprecedented unanimity, national and state education associations welcomed the report, some with the hope that more federal aid might come to support the commission's recommendations. Neither the White House nor the U.S. Department of Education encouraged such hopes. Education Secretary Terrel H. Bell declared time and again that the reforms must be carried out by state and local education agencies. Soon after the report's release, Bell announced that 40 states had created commissions to implement the report's recommendations and that "uncounted" school districts were similarly inspired.

The year's next major development was "a rising tide of school reports" dealing with the high school, improvement of science and mathematics instruction, need for increased use of technology in the classroom, the condition of teachers and teaching, and the relation of schools to economic growth.

High School, written by Ernest L. Boyer of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, acclaimed as "the best-written of all the reform reports," was published by Harper & Row and almost reached the status of a best-seller. Two of Boyer's ideas in particular caught the attention of readers: 1) that the classroom teacher is the key to reform and to the success of any school (for some reason none of the other reports recognized this truth); and 2) mastery of English is the first and most essential goal of education (other reports stressed science, math, and improved vocational skills).

Educating Americans for the Twenty-First Century gained wide notice and created serious discussion in scientific and business communities and in Congress. It was prepared by the National Science Foundation and dealt with "the mediocre and inadequate instruction in science and mathematics plaguing the American schools." Among frequently quoted words from the report were: "Alarming numbers of young Americans are ill-equipped to work in, contribute to, profit from, and enjoy our increasingly technological society. Far too many [of our students] emerge from the nation's schools with an inadequate grounding in mathematics, science, and technology."

The report urged the creation of a national network of exemplary schools that would exchange ideas in science and math instruction; plus "a vast retraining" of science and math teachers for the next 10 years. The network and the retraining program, the report said, would cost more than one billion dollars a year. The White House discouraged the proposals; some in Congress said they were worth studying.

A third report attracting attention was *Action for Excellence*, known as the Hunt Report after its author, Governor James B. Hunt Jr. of North Carolina. This document set down the following precepts: The United States can be only as strong as its capacity to produce. High levels of production depend on technology. And technology depends on a skilled and educated people. The nation's schools and colleges must develop the workers, the thinkers, the technicians, and the leaders needed in a technological society. Excellence in education, starting with elementary grades, must become a national policy to support economic growth.

Only the President of the United States could compete with, and at times dominate, the news made by the reform reports. Ronald Reagan did so in 1983, as he crisscrossed the land, stumping for his brand of education and his views on educational policy. Seldom has a chief executive injected himself

so deeply into school issues in one year. He made education news, took the headlines, stimulated discussion, and, in the cliché of the year, "put education on the national agenda." He delivered commencement addresses, spoke at conventions of the American Federation of Teachers (avoiding the National Education Association) and of the national PTA, visited elementary and secondary schools, lectured to students, and accepted honorary degrees.

At these speaking and photo opportunities, Mr. Reagan:

- urged parents and school districts "to regain control of education";
- charged that federal dollars have resulted in a decline of educational quality;
- defended his administration against accusations that it cut funds for federally aided school programs;
- extolled merit pay for teachers as "an important solution to what ails teaching";
- called on school boards to "return the school curriculum to the basics";
- promoted the use of vouchers and tuition tax credits;
- repeated demands that Congress enact a constitutional amendment permitting prayer in the schools; and
- asked teachers to assign more homework to students.

"No mistake about it, 1983 was a very special year, because after more than a decade of neglect, education became a top priority," said Ernest L. Boyer. "Education in America is not now being ignored, taken for granted, or mindlessly condemned. Education matters once again."

Early Reactions to *A Nation at Risk*

Interviewing for the 1983 education survey was conducted only two weeks after *A Nation at Risk* was released to the public by the President's National Commission on Excellence in Education in April. At the time, few people anticipated the continuing attention that would be given to the commission's report. The fact that it was followed by a series of national reports by other agencies, all critical of the status quo in education, added to the impact of *A Nation at Risk*. A national debate was begun that has not yet subsided.

Prescient or not, poll planners made an effort at that early date to measure the impact of *A Nation at Risk*. Gallup found that only 28% of those interviewed in the national sample had heard of or read about the report. Of this group, 79% could cite some of the facts and conclusions of the report. In short, at the time of the survey, the report had reached an audience of approximately one person in five in the U.S. adult population. This fact led Gallup to conclude that the commission's report had not substantially changed the views of the public about public education. One reason for this, he surmised, was the fact that the public already agreed with many of the commission's main conclusions.

The "informed" group of respondents was asked if, in general, they agreed or disagreed with the conclusions of the report. Nearly nine in 10 did agree with the findings of the commission. To get some indication of the sentiments of those who had not read the report and were not aware of its conclusions, Gallup's interviewers asked this group whether they agreed or disagreed with the finding that "the quality of education in the U.S. public schools is only fair and not improving." This group, as in the case of the informed group, expressed overwhelming agreement with that conclusion.

The question and the findings:

Have you heard or read anything about the recent report of the President's National Commission on Excellence in Education?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	28	27	31	29
No	68	69	65	69
Don't know	4	4	4	2

The question asked of the informed group *only* and the findings:

In general, do you agree or disagree with the report's conclusions?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Agree	87	87	84	90
Disagree	8	8	9	10
Don't know	5	5	7	-

The question asked of the uninformed group *only* and the findings:

The Commission concluded that the quality of education in the U.S. public schools is only fair and not improving. Do you agree with this opinion or disagree?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Agree	74	74	77	77
Disagree	13	12	15	10
No opinion	13	14	8	13

1983 Rating of the Public Schools

The public's rating of the local public schools in 1983 registered the sharpest drop of any year since 1974, when this question was instituted. In 1974, 48% gave local public schools a rating of A or B. In 1983, the comparable figure was 31%. (The 1974 ratings were: A, 18%; B, 30%; C, 21%; D, 6%; FAIL, 5%; and Don't know, 20%).

More significant, perhaps, was the rating given their local public schools by parents with children attending public

schools. In 1974, 64% of these parents gave the schools their children attended an A or B rating. In 1983, the comparable figure was 42%.

The question and the findings:

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	Rating of the Local Public Schools					
By Adults with:	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**FAIL**	**Don't Know**
	%	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**
Children in public schools	11	31	36	10	7	5
Children in nonpublic schools	5	22	24	23	9	17
No children in school	5	23	31	13	6	22

Rating of Public Schools Nationally

Respondents in the survey gave their local schools higher ratings than they gave the public schools nationwide. Gallup said:

> It appears that the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education had some influence on the ratings of the public schools nationally. Those respondents who were familiar with the findings of the report were more critical of U.S. schools than was the public at large.

But one must also consider the possibility that those individuals who were already strongly critical of the schools would be more likely than others to pay attention to media reports saying that "the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity."

Only 12% of the group familiar with the Commission report gave the public schools nationally a rating of A or B; at the same time, 30% gave them a rating of D or Fail. By contrast, 19% of the general public gave the schools a rating of A or B, and 22% gave them a rating of D or Fail.

The question and the findings:

How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
A rating	2	2	3	2
B rating	17	17	16	14
C rating	38	38	42	35
D rating	16	15	17	18
FAIL	6	6	6	7
Don't know	21	22	16	24

	A	B	C	D	FAIL	Don't Know
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Public schools in this community	6	25	32	13	7	17
Public schools in the nation	2	17	38	16	6	21

How Parents of Public School Children Rate Various Aspects of Their Schooling

The consultants who planned the questions included in the 1983 survey thought it would be instructive if parents of children in the public schools were to rate various aspects of their children's schooling, in addition to rating the schools overall. Listed here, in order of favorable votes (A and B), are the 11 aspects of schooling rated.

The question and the findings:

Using the A, B, C, D, and FAIL scale again, please grade the public schools in this community for each of the following.

	A	B	C	D	FAIL	Don't Know
	%	%	%	%	%	%
The physical plants and facilities	30	35	21	5	2	7
The curriculum, that is, the subjects offered	24	37	25	4	3	7
The handling of extra-curricular activities — sports, theater, etc.	20	33	26	8	4	9
Books and instructional materials	19	33	32	6	2	8
Quality of teaching	13	35	29	12	4	7
Education students get	14	32	29	15	4	6
The way schools are administered	11	28	29	17	8	7
Preparing students for college	12	26	27	17	4	14
The way discipline is handled	11	21	22	20	19	7
Preparing for jobs those students not planning to go to college	7	19	29	20	9	16
Behavior of students	5	19	27	19	22	8

Major Problems Confronting the Public Schools in 1983

When respondents in the 1983 survey were asked to name the biggest problems facing their local public schools, the answers were quite similar to those recorded in earlier surveys. The top four problems cited continued to be "discipline," "use of drugs," "poor curriculum/poor standards," and "lack of proper financial support." Parents who had children attending public schools cited the same four problems and in the same order as the public at large.

Although discipline continued to be regarded as the number-one problem, the frequency with which other problems or concerns were expressed had changed. For example, "integration/busing" and "lack of proper facilities" were named frequently in earlier surveys; they were far down the list of major concerns in 1983.

Because discipline is so frequently cited as a major problem in the public schools, the survey sought to shed further light on underlying causes of the perceived lack of discipline.

The question and the findings:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the *public* schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Lack of discipline	25	23	29	31
Use of drugs	18	17	20	16
Poor curriculum/poor standards	14	14	14	19
Lack of proper financial suppport	13	12	17	8
Difficulty getting good teachers	8	8	9	7
Teachers' lack of interest	8	9	6	9
Parents' lack of interest	6	6	9	5
Integration/busing	5	6	8	4
Pupils' lack of interest/truancy	5	6	4	1
Moral standards	4	4	4	6
Drinking/alcoholism	3	3	4	5
Large schools/ overcrowding	3	2	5	6
Lack of respect for teachers/other students	3	3	2	6
Mismanagement of funds	2	2	1	1
Problems with administration	1	2	1	-
Crime/vandalism	1	1	1	-
Teachers' strikes	1	1	1	6
Communication problems	1	1	2	1
Lack of proper facilities	1	1	1	3
Parental involvement with school activities	1	1	1	*
Lack of needed teachers	1	1	2	1
Fighting	1	1	*	1
Non-English-speaking students	1	1	1	-
Government interference	1	1	*	1
There are no problems	1	1	3	1
Miscellaneous	2	2	3	3
Don't know/ no answer	16	19	7	15

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)
*Less than one-half of 1%.

Why Is There a Discipline Problem?

A card listing 11 reasons for lack of discipline was handed to each respondent included in the survey and this question was asked:

Many people say that discipline is one of the major problems of the public schools today. Would you please look over this list and tell me which reasons you think are most important to explain why there is a discipline problem?

Gallup said, "Those identified with the public schools can take comfort from the fact that the chief blame is laid on the home, with disrespect for law and order throughout society ranking second in frequency of mention."

The percentage of votes given each of the 11 statements was as follows, listed according to frequency of mention:

1. Lack of discipline in the home (72%).
2. Lack of respect for law and authority throughout society (54%).
3. Students who are constant troublemakers often can't be removed from school (42%).
4. Some teachers are not properly trained to deal with discipline problems (42%).
5. The courts have made school administrators so cautious that they don't deal severely with student misbehavior (41%).
6. Viewing television programs that emphasize crime and violence (39%).
7. Punishment is too lenient (39%).
8. Decline in the teaching of good manners (37%).
9. Teachers themselves do not command respect (36%).
10. Failure on the part of teachers to make classroom work more interesting (31%).
11. One-parent families (26%).

Voting on Tax Increases

Gallup said:

> Although only a minority of the respondents (39%) say that they would vote to raise school taxes at this time, the report of the National Commission may help persuade more citizens to favor a tax increase. Those familiar with the report favor raising taxes by a margin of 48% to 46%.

The question and the findings:

Suppose the local public schools said they needed much more money. As you feel at this time, would you vote to raise taxes for this purpose, or would you vote against raising taxes for this purpose?

	Financial Support of the Public Schools		
NATIONAL TOTALS	Favor Raising Taxes	Opposed to Raising Taxes	Don't Know
	%	%	%
1983 survey	39	52	9
1981 survey	30	60	10
1972 survey	36	56	8
1971 survey	40	52	8
1970 survey	37	56	7
1969 survey	45	49	6

1983 Survey	Favor Raising Taxes	Opposed to Raising Taxes	Don't Know
	%	%	%
Parents of children attending public school	48	45	7
Parents of children attending nonpublic school	40	55	5
Adults with no children in school	36	53	11

Further breakdowns:

	Favor Raising Taxes %	Opposed to Raising Taxes %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**39**	**52**	**9**
Sex			
Men	40	51	9
Women	37	53	10
Race			
White	37	54	9
Nonwhite	50	40	10
Age			
18 to 29 years	46	44	10
30 to 49 years	44	48	8
50 years and over	28	62	10
Community size			
1 million and over	38	51	11
500,000 — 999,999	50	42	8
50,000 — 499,999	44	48	8
2,500 — 49,999	31	59	10
Under 2,500	33	57	10
Central City	44	48	8
Education			
Grade school	24	70	6
High school	35	55	10
College	49	41	10
Region			
East	31	60	9
Midwest	35	57	8
South	40	48	12
West	53	39	8

The Voucher System

In 1983, for the first time in this survey series, a clear majority (51%) favored the idea of the voucher system – a plan whereby the federal government would allot a certain amount of money for the education of each child, regardless of whether the child attended a public, parochial, or independent school. Significantly, public school parents favored the voucher system by a margin of 48% to 41%.

Support for the voucher system represented a substantial shift in the public's attitude. Between 1970 (when the question was first asked) and 1981, the idea elicited a mixed reception. In 1970 a slightly higher percentage opposed the idea than favored it. This was also true in 1971. In the 1981 survey those in favor held a slight majority over those opposed.

The question and the findings:

In some nations, the government allots a certain amount of money for each child for his or her education. The parents can then send the child to any public, parochial, or private school they choose. This is called the "voucher system." Would you like to see such an idea adopted in this country?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor voucher system	51	51	48	64
Oppose voucher system	38	37	41	30
No opinion	11	12	11	6

NATIONAL TOTALS	Favor %	Oppose %	No Opinion %
1970 survey	43	46	11
1971 survey	38	44	18
1981 survey	43	41	16
1983 survey	51	38	11

Promotion Based on Examinations

Promotion from grade to grade based on examinations and not "social" promotion was favored by a substantial majority of the 1983 survey respondents. This view was shared by parents of schoolchildren and by those who had no children in school – and by almost the same percentages.

The question and the findings:

In your opinion, should children be promoted from grade to grade only if they can pass examinations?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	75	75	73	71
No	20	19	23	27
Don't know	5	6	4	2

NATIONAL TOTALS	1983 %	1978 %
Yes	75	68
No	20	27
Don't know	5	5

National Test Scores Used for Comparison Purposes

The results of the question about the use of national tests as a way of judging the local schools revealed once again the public's faith in tests and, at the same time, the public's desire to have another measure of the quality of education in their own local schools.

One important proviso should be added, however. Earlier survey reports pointed out that comparisons should take full account of the composition of the school population. Comparisons are only valid if the local school population reflects the national population. Schools that draw students from poor neighborhoods where parents have had little education and where language barriers exist obviously cannot be expected to achieve the same levels of test scores as schools in high-income communities.

The question:

Would you like to see the students in the local schools be given national tests, so that their educational achievement could be compared with students in other communities?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	75	72	80	79
No	17	17	16	18
Don't know	8	11	4	3

NATIONAL TOTALS	1983	1971	1970
	%	%	%
Yes	75	70	75
No	17	21	16
Don't know	8	9	9

Too Much or Too Little Schoolwork for Students?

Are students in elementary schools or high schools made to work too hard? Widespread agreement existed on this issue in 1983 among parents of schoolchildren and those without children in the public schools.

Two-thirds of all respondents, in both the case of elementary school children and of high school students, agreed that the workload given students was too light. An earlier survey of students found that students themselves say that they are not given enough homework.

A significant change had taken place since the 1975 survey, when the same questions were asked of the public. At that time 49% said that students in elementary school were not required to work hard enough. In 1983 the percentage had increased to 61%. In 1975, 54% said that high school students were not required to work hard enough; in 1983 that percentage was 65%.

The first question and the findings:

In general, do you think *elementary* school children in the public schools here are made to work too hard in school and on homework, or not hard enough?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Too hard	4	3	6	4
Not hard enough	61	62	60	70
About right amount	19	15	27	16
Don't know	16	20	7	10

The second question and the findings:

What about students in the public high school here — in general, are they required to work too hard or not hard enough?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Too hard	3	3	4	-
Not hard enough	65	66	63	69
About right amount	12	11	14	9
Don't know	20	20	19	22

Increasing the Length of the School Year

Although more individuals opposed than approved increasing the length of the school year in their communities by one month, more respondents favored a 10-month school year in this year's survey than in 1982. Moreover, those who were familiar with the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education were strongly in favor of such a change. More of those parents with children in nonpublic schools approved than disapproved of extending the school year. Individuals who had no children attending school showed the least enthusiasm for increasing the school year from the current average of 180 days.

The question and the findings:

In some nations, students attend school as many as 240 days a year as compared to about 180 days in the U.S. How do you feel about extending the public school year in this community by 30 days, making the school year about 210 days or 10 months long? Do you favor or oppose this idea?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	40	39	43	50
Oppose	49	47	52	44
Don't know	11	14	5	6

NATIONAL TOTALS	1983	1982
	%	%
Favor	40	37
Oppose	49	53
Don't know	11	10

Lengthening the School Day by One Hour

The same general pattern of opinion regarding the lengthening of the school year by one month was found when respondents were asked about lengthening the school day by one hour. Younger persons were most opposed to such a change, as were those who lived in small communities and those who lived in the Midwest and South. Those most in favor tended to be nonwhites and residents of the West.

The question and the findings:

How do you feel about extending the school *day* in the public schools in this community by one hour? Do you favor or oppose this idea?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	41	42	40	46
Oppose	48	46	54	40
Don't know	11	12	6	14

NATIONAL TOTALS	1983	1982
	%	%
Favor	41	37
Oppose	48	55
Don't know	11	8

Further breakdowns:

	Favor	Oppose	Don't Know
	%	%	%
NATIONAL TOTALS	**41**	**48**	**11**
Sex			
Men	43	45	12
Women	40	50	10
Race			
White	40	49	11
Nonwhite	52	38	10

	Favor	Oppose	Don't Know
	%	%	%
NATIONAL TOTALS	**41**	**48**	**11**
Age			
18 to 29 years	36	56	8
30 to 49 years	42	50	8
50 years and over	45	39	16
Community size			
1 million and over	47	43	10
500,000 — 999,999	46	44	10
50,000 — 499,999	48	43	9
2,500 — 49,999	37	49	14
Under 2,500	30	57	13
Central City	48	42	10
Education			
Grade school	41	38	21
High school	38	52	10
College	46	46	8
Region			
East	46	45	9
Midwest	37	53	10
South	33	52	15
West	53	37	10

Satisfaction of Parents with Subjects Taught

Parents who were sending their children to nonpublic schools were more satisfied with the learning that took place there – and with the general curriculum – than were parents who were sending their children to the public schools. The difference was not great, however, and a high degree of satisfaction was found among both groups. Both groups had registered some decline in satisfaction with the general curriculum since 1973.

The question and the findings:

Do you think your child is learning the things you believe he or she should be learning?

	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%
Yes	74	82
No	20	9
Don't know	6	9

	Public School Parents	
	1983	1973
	%	%
Yes	74	81
No	20	14
Don't know	6	5

Subjects the Public Would Require in High School

In 1983, a majority of the American public wanted high schools to require courses in mathematics and English, regardless of whether students planned to continue their education in college or to get jobs following graduation. For those students who planned to go on to college, the public wanted required courses in history/U.S. government, science, business, and foreign language. For those who planned to end their education with high school, the public would require vocational training, business, history/U.S. government, and science.

Those respondents who would require a foreign language were asked, "Which foreign language(s)?" The preferred language, by a large margin, was Spanish, followed by French and German, in that order. A surprising number of parents with children in school (12%) would have required that the Russian language be taught.

The question and the findings:

Would you look over this card which lists high school subjects. If you were the one to decide, what subjects would you require every public high school student who *plans to go on to college* to take?

	1983	1981
	%	%
Mathematics	92	94
English	88	91
History/U.S. government	78	83
Science	76	76
Business	55	60
Foreign language	50	54
Health education	43	47
Physical education	41	44
Vocational training	32	34
Art	19	28
Music	18	26

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple responses.)

The second question and the findings:

What about those public high school students who do *not plan to go to college* when they graduate? Which courses would you require them to take?

	1983	1981
	%	%
Mathematics	87	91
English	83	89
Vocational training	74	64
Business	65	75
History/U.S. government	63	71
Science	53	58
Health education	42	46
Physical education	40	43
Foreign language	19	21
Art	16	20
Music	16	20

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple responses.)

The final question (asked of those who would require foreign language for high school graduates) and the findings:

What foreign language or languages should be required

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Spanish	56	58	54	44
French	34	35	32	34
German	16	16	14	20
Latin	8	6	11	12

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Russian	8	7	12	7
Japanese	6	6	5	7
Other	4	4	5	10
Don't know	24	23	21	30

(Figures add to more than 100% because of mutliple responses.)

Instruction in Special Areas

In addition to traditional school subjects, the public in 1983 wanted the schools to give special instruction in many other fields, presumably because other institutions, including the home, had not been notably successful in dealing with these areas of instruction. This was especially true in the case of education about the abuse of drugs and alcohol.

More than seven in 10 adults would have required driver education. A majority approved of required instruction in the use of computers, as well as training in parenting.

The 1983 survey included several additional subject areas; all of these except the dangers of nuclear war were approved by a slight majority.

The question and the findings:

In addition to regular courses, high schools offer instruction in other areas. As I read off these areas, one at a time, would you tell me whether you feel this instruction should be required or should not be required for all high school students?

	Should Be Required	Should Not Be Required	No Opinion
	%	%	%
Drug abuse	81	14	5
Alcohol abuse	76	18	6
Driver education	72	23	5
Computer training	72	21	7
Parenting/parent training	58	32	10
Dangers of nuclear waste*	56	33	11
Race relations*	56	33	11
Communism/socialism*	51	38	11
Dangers of nuclear war*	46	42	12

*These topics were not included in the 1981 survey

	Should Be Required	
	1983	1981
	%	%
Drug abuse	81	82
Alcohol abuse	76	78
Driver education	72	71
Computer training	72	43
Parenting/parent training	58	64

Availability of Computers in the Schools

In 1983, computers were available to students in a surprisingly large number of U.S. schools. Nearly half of the parents of children attending the public schools and the nonpublic schools said that these schools had computers that their children could use. And eight in 10 of the parents with children in schools that did not have computers said they would like to have computers available for their children.

Schools in the East and in the Midwest were much more likely to have computers available to students than were schools in the West and South.

The question and the findings:

Does the school your child attends have a computer that students can use?

	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%
Yes	45	47
No	32	33
Don't know	23	20

The following question was asked of those whose children do not have access to a computer in school:

Would you like the school your child attends to install a computer that students could use?

	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%
Yes	81	56
No	10	30
Don't know	9	14

The Public Appraises Its Knowledge of the Local Schools

Although there had been a slight increase in the number of individuals throughout the U.S. who said they knew "quite a lot" or "some" about their local schools, the fact remains that more than a third said that they knew "very little" or "nothing" about them in 1983. In the 14-year span between 1969 and 1983, the increase in the number who said they knew "quite a lot" was only four percentage points.

These percentages indicate that the public relations efforts of schools had not been very successful in reaching members of the public who did not have children attending the schools but who, nevertheless, could and did vote in school bond elections.

The question and the findings:

How much do you know about the local schools — quite a lot, some, or very little?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Quite a lot	22	19	31	21
Some	42	38	55	47
Very little	29	34	13	24
Nothing	7	9	1	8

NATIONAL TOTALS	1983	1969
	%	%
Quite a lot	22	18
Some	42	40
Very little	29	42
Nothing	7	-

What Is the Best Way to Reach the Public with Information About the Schools

In 1983, members of the public who did not have children attending the local public schools said that their best source of information about the schools was the local newspaper. Parents with children in the public schools got most of their information from their own children.

The question and the findings:

What are the sources of information you use to judge the quality of schools in your local community; that is, where do you get your information about the schools?

Information Sources	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Newspapers	42	44	37	51
Students	36	28	59	30
Parents of students	29	24	41	33
Other adults	27	25	28	34
School board/faculty	24	19	38	23
Radio and/or television	19	22	12	13
Personal experience	8	7	8	9
Other	4	3	5	2
Undesignated	7	9	1	4

(Figures add to more than 100% because of mutliple responses.)

	Sources of Information	
	1983 %	1973 %
Newspapers	42	38
Students	36	43
Parents of students	29	33
Other adults	27	23
School board/faculty	24	33
Radio and/or television	19	20
Personal experience	8	-
PTA	-	3
Other	4	12
Undesignated	7	4

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple responses.)

The Public's Involvement with the Local Schools

When citizens included in the 1983 survey were asked about their involvement with the local schools, their answers indicated that the schools nationally were failing to reach a large segment of the adult population. In fact, more than half of those with no children in school said that they have had no direct contact or relationship with their local schools since the opening of school in September (the question was asked in May). This may help explain why more than 40% – in answer to another question – said that they know little or nothing about the local schools.

The question and the findings:

Since September, which of the following, if any, have you yourself done?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Received any newsletter, pamphlet, or any other material telling what the local public schools are doing	32	22	58	38
Attended a local public school athletic event	25	18	42	28
Attended a school play or concert in any local public school	24	16	42	36
Met with any teachers or administrators in the local public school about your own child	21	4	62	44
Attended a PTA meeting	14	4	36	46
Attended any meeting dealing with the local public school situation	10	7	18	13
Attended a school board meeting	8	4	16	24
Written any letter to the school board, newspaper, or any other organization about the local school situation	4	3	6	5
None of the above	43	56	14	22
Don't know	4	4	2	6

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple responses.)

Importance of a College Education

Between 1978 and 1983, the public changed markedly in its view about the importance of a college education. Since a question about the importance of a college education was first asked (1978), the percentage of individuals who said that a college education is "very important" had increased from 36% to 58%. Those with children attending school were even more convinced of the importance of a college education.

The question and the findings:

How important is a college education today — very important, fairly important, or not too important?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Very important	58	57	60	60
Fairly important	31	31	32	30
Not too important	8	8	7	6
Don't know	3	4	1	4

NATIONAL TOTALS	1983 %	1978 %
Very important	58	36
Fairly important	31	46
Not too important	8	16
Don't know	3	2

Teaching as a Career

In five surveys, beginning in 1969, respondents were asked if they would like a child of theirs to take up teaching as a career. In 1983, substantially more respondents were undecided than in earlier years. The percentage giving a definite yes was slightly lower than in 1981 and substantially lower than in 1969, when 75% of all respondents said that they would like a child of theirs to take up teaching in the public schools as a career. The comparable figure in 1983 was 45%.

To help explain this marked change, respondents were asked why they would, or would not, like a child of theirs to become a public school teacher. The answers to this question from those who said no, listed in order of frequency of mention, were: 1) low pay; 2) discipline problems; 3) unrewarding, thankless work; and 4) low prestige of teaching as a profession. Those who said that they would like a child of theirs to enter the teaching profession said that teaching: 1) is a worthwhile profession, 2) contributes to society, 3) is a challenging job, and 4) can make a real difference in a child's life.

The question and the findings:

Would you like to have a child of yours take up teaching in the public schools as a career?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	45	42	51	40
No	33	33	33	39
Don't know	22	25	16	21

Personal Qualities Most Desired in Teachers

When respondents were asked in an "open" question about the personal qualities they would look for if they could choose their child's teacher, their responses indicated that they would seek a model of perfection – someone who is understanding, patient, friendly, intelligent, and who has a sense of humor and high moral character. Farther down the list, the public would seek out a person who has the ability to motivate and inspire children and possesses enthusiasm for the subject being taught.

The question:

Suppose you could choose your child's teachers. Assuming they had all had about the same experiences and training, what *personal* qualities would you look for?

The qualities respondents named most often, in order of mention:

1. Ability to communicate, to understand, to relate
2. Patience
3. Ability to discipline, to be firm and fair
4. High moral character
5. Friendliness, good personality, sense of humor
6. Dedication to teaching profession, enthusiasm
7. Ability to inspire, motivate students
8. Intelligence
9. Caring about students

Teachers' Salaries

About one person in four of those questioned in the 1983 survey registered no opinion about whether teachers' salaries were "too high," "too low," or "just about right." Of those who did have an opinion, many more said that salaries were too low than too high.

When the "no opinion" group is eliminated and percentages are based on those with opinions, one can discern a sharp recent increase in the number saying that salaries were "too low."

The question:

Do you think salaries for teachers in this community are too high, too low, or just about right?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Too high	8	8	9	5
Too low	35	33	37	42
About right	31	30	35	32
No opinion	26	29	19	21

NATIONAL TOTALS	1983	1981	1969
	%	%	%
Too high	8	10	2
Too low	35	29	33
About right	31	41	43
No opinion	26	20	22

NATIONAL TOTALS (with "no opinion" group eliminated)	1983	1981	1969
	%	%	%
Too high	11	13	3
Too low	47	36	42
About right	42	51	55

Further breakdowns:

	Too High	Too Low	About Right	Don't Know
	%	%	%	%
NATIONAL TOTALS	**8**	**35**	**31**	**26**
Sex				
Men	9	36	34	21
Women	7	33	30	30
Race				
White	9	33	32	26
Nonwhite	4	42	28	26
Age				
18 to 29 years	5	45	28	22
30 to 49 years	7	39	32	22
50 years and over	12	22	33	33
Community size				
1 million and over	9	34	30	27
500,000 — 999,999	4	42	26	28
50,000 — 499,999	6	39	30	25
2,500 — 49,999	10	37	32	21
Under 2,500	10	25	36	29
Central city	7	43	28	22

	Too High %	Too Low %	About Right %	Don't Know %
Education				
Grade school	16	18	32	34
High school	8	31	33	28
College	5	45	29	21
Region				
East	11	29	35	25
Midwest	10	32	37	21
South	5	41	26	28
West	6	37	25	32

More Pay for Math and Science Teachers

In 1983 the public was evenly divided on the question of giving higher wages to math and science teachers and to those who teach technical and vocational subjects than to teachers of other subjects because of the shortage of teachers in these fields. When those who had "no opinion" were eliminated, however, more respondents said that they favored paying these teachers higher wages than that they would oppose such a move. Widespread agreement on this question existed among persons with children attending public and nonpublic schools and among those who had no children in school.

The question and the findings:

Today there is a shortage of teachers in science, math, technical subjects, and vocational subjects. If your local public schools needed teachers in these subjects, would you favor or oppose paying them higher wages than teachers of other subjects?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor paying them higher wages	50	50	49	45
Oppose	35	34	41	38
Don't know	15	16	10	17

Merit Pay for Teachers

In 1983 the public voted nearly two-to-one in favor of merit pay for teachers. The percentage favoring merit pay had increased slightly since 1970, when the same question was asked of a similar cross section of U.S. adults. In 1970, 58% of the public favored merit pay and 36% favored a standard scale. In 1983 the comparable percentages were 61% and 31%.

Parents of schoolchildren favored merit pay by almost the same margin as the general public. Those who were familiar with the report of the President's Commission were more strongly in favor of merit pay, voting 71% to 25% in favor of it.

The question and the findings:

Should each teacher be paid on the basis of the quality of his or her work, or should all teachers be paid on a standard-scale basis?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Quality of work	61	61	61	64
Standard scale	31	30	34	30
Don't know	8	9	5	6

NATIONAL TOTALS	1983 %	1970 %
Quality of work	61	58
Standard scale	31	36
Don't know	8	6

Willingness to Pay More Taxes to Raise Educational Standards

Gallup said, "The report of the President's Commission may have a positive effect in helping communities increase tax revenues for their local public schools – provided that such increases are aimed at raising educational standards."

In an earlier question in this 1983 survey, respondents were asked if they would vote to raise taxes if their schools claimed that they needed much more money. The vote on this question was 39% yes and 53% no. Although this represented an appreciable increase in the yes vote over 1981, it was far less than the 58% who said that they would be willing to pay more taxes to raise the standard of education throughout the nation.

Gallup said, "Two points need to be borne in mind. First, the public would obviously like to have the federal government contribute more to help finance the public schools. And second, respondents see a need for raising the educational standard throughout the nation."

The question and the findings:

Would you be willing to pay more taxes to help raise the standard of education in the United States?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	58	54	70	57
No	33	35	24	38
Don't know	9	11	6	5

Looking Ahead to the Year 2000: Changes That the Public Foresees in the Educational System

Many suggestions for improving the education system were presented to respondents in this survey to determine what chance they thought these suggestions had of being carried out between 1983 and the year 2000.

Those respondents who were familiar with the report of the President's Commission differed little in their views from those who had children attending the public and nonpublic schools.

The question:

As you look ahead to the year 2000 (that's 17 years from now), what do you think the schools will be doing then to educate students?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Do you think that all students will have access to a computer and be trained in its use?				
Yes	86	84	92	90
No	6	6	5	7
Don't know	8	10	3	3
Do you think that more importance will be given to vocational training in high school?				
Yes	76	76	77	69
No	11	11	13	19
Don't know	13	13	10	12
Do you think that more attention will be given to teaching students how to think?				
Yes	70	68	73	72
No	16	16	17	15
Don't know	14	16	10	13
Do you think that what is now covered in the first two years of college will be covered before graduation from high school?				
Yes	65	62	71	67
No	19	20	19	23
Don't know	16	18	10	10
Do you think that more attention will be given to individual instruction?				
Yes	53	53	51	59
No	32	31	37	28
Don't know	15	16	12	13
Do you think children will start school at an earlier age — such as 3 or 4 years old?				
Yes	51	49	52	55
No	37	37	38	37
Don't know	12	14	10	8
Do you think that taxpayers will be willing to vote more favorably on bond issues and give more financial support to the schools?				
Yes	45	44	47	49
No	36	35	37	38
Don't know	19	21	16	13
Do you think that the school program will cover 12 months of the year — with less time for holidays?				
Yes	33	30	38	40
No	53	53	54	53
Don't know	14	17	8	7

Chapter 17
The Sixteenth Annual Poll, 1984

Events of the Year in Education

"This is the year of transition for education," said the Education Commission of the States (ECS). It was also the year of the great education debates and the year of state actions to carry out reform proposals set forth in what were now called "the excellence reports."

Soon after publication of *A Nation at Risk*, states began to appoint blue-ribbon task forces on improving education. By 1984 the ECS identified 280 such groups. Legislators, state boards of education, and boards of regents and governors were usually in the lead of the task-force efforts. By 1984, too, California and Florida had completed work on major education reform bills and started to put them in effect. Similar actions soon followed in Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Washington. What impressed observers was that the state reform measures were broad-gauged and wide-ranging, often called omnibus bills, which affected nearly all aspects of education within a state.

A good example was the South Carolina Improvement Act of 1984, described as the largest reform effort undertaken in the state's history. Supported by an appropriation of $213 million, the act provided for:

- An increase in high school graduation requirements (from 18 to 20 units), plus extension of the school day to no less than six hours and of the school year to no less than 180 days.
- Increases in teacher salaries to the average for the southeastern part of the country, extension of teacher contracts to 190 days, and periodic teacher evaluation.
- Compulsory skill examinations for high school graduates and remedial programs for students who did not meet state basic requirements. The pupil-teacher ratio was to be kept at no more than 30:1 in high schools and in elementary mathematics and language arts classes.
- Additional state funds for construction and renovation of school buildings, tax relief for school districts already involved in capital improvement, and support for long-range maintenance of school buildings.

In addition, South Carolina's act set up plans to improve the work of principals and superintendents, to encourage school volunteers, and to give the state superintendent authority to intervene in the management of school districts in which educational quality was deteriorating.

Measures in other states, besides covering many of the items included in South Carolina's legislation, provided state aid for kindergartens, encouraged the development of master teachers, banned social promotions, provided for the education of school board members, guaranteed a 45-minute planning period for each full-time classroom teacher, and (in Texas) limited nonemergency public address announcements to one a day.

Under pressure from President Reagan, educators began a re-examination of merit pay for teachers – and the controversies flared throughout the year.

Merit pay, according to the President, means paying a bonus to the best teachers. It means rewarding excellence in teaching. "It is a pay plan," Mr. Reagan frequently repeated, advising all educators to take note, "that focuses on merit rather than on seniority. It's the American way." The President often called attention to merit pay proposals sponsored by Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander, a leading proponent, under which "excellent" teachers could increase their pay from $1,000 to $7,000 a year.

The President's comments on merit pay raised underlying questions among laymen and mass-media commentators: whether poor teachers should earn as much as good teachers, whether teacher pay scales should be based on seniority and the number of college credits earned, and whether there should be special rewards for outstanding teaching performance.

For teachers and school administrators, the issue was complicated. The National Education Association defined merit pay as "a system of rewarding differently professionals who carry out identical tasks" – and was strongly opposed to that. Opposition also came from researchers who concluded, after a review of experiments with merit pay, that:

- merit pay is not the cure-all for public school ills.
- changing to merit pay from the existing single-salary plan is risky, costly, and may create more problems than are solved.
- the existing single salary plan is better than merit pay.

Among questions that troubled teachers and administrators were: 1) How would a school district determine its outstanding teachers? 2) Who would identify them and on what criteria? 3) Could merit pay be administered without favoritism and personality clashes? 4) What effect would the plan have on the large majority of teachers not qualifying for the extra compensation?

Bowing in part to the public pressure generated by the President, some administrators said they might try merit pay provided teachers and principals participated in its development and application. Teachers, for their part, said that other incentive rewards, such as extra pay for extra work, should be tried first. In a formal statement, the NEA said, "The merit pay teachers need is the kind that recognizes the merit of

education's contribution to society." Translated, this meant, Let's raise the basic pay for all teachers.

Poll Findings

George H. Gallup Sr. died in July 1984, only a few weeks after completing his report of the 1984 Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa education survey. Because the education survey was his favorite project, Gallup had always given it his personal attention and sought to improve it. One improvement he made in his last report was an opening summary, which follows:

> Americans are more favorably disposed toward the public schools today than at any time in the last decade. In this year's survey, more Americans (42%) grade their local schools A or B for their performance than at any time since 1976 – with an 11-point increase just since last year. Virtually the same dramatic increase occurs among the parents of public school children – with a 10% rise since last year in the percentage giving the local schools an A or B rating.
>
> Americans have also become significantly more favorably disposed toward public school teachers and administrators. In 1981, 39% gave teachers a grade of A or B, whereas today the figure is 50%. Moreover, the A or B grades given to principals and administrators have risen from 36% to 47% during the same three-year period.
>
> A final indicator that reveals an increase in favorable feelings toward the schools is the public's increased willingness to pay the price for public education. The percentage of Americans who say that they would be willing to pay more taxes for education has risen from 30% to 41%.
>
> Americans continue to feel that public education contributes more to national strength than either industrial might or military power. More than eight in 10 say that developing the best educational system in the world will be "very important" in determining America's future strength, compared to 70% who favor developing the best industrial production system and only 45% who favor developing the strongest military force.
>
> The American public is divided in its support for the various recommendations proposed in the recently published reports concerning U.S. education. The public strongly favors 1) increasing the amount of schoolwork and homework in both elementary and high school, 2) basing all grade promotions on examinations, and 3) employing nationally standardized tests for high school diplomas. Support for each of these proposals has increased in recent years.
>
> Americans also support, by wide margins, the ideas of career ladders for teachers and state board teacher examinations in every subject. To a lesser degree, the public feels that salaries for teachers are too low; Americans support higher pay for teachers where shortages exist, including mathematics, science, technical subjects, vocational training, and other critical areas.
>
> Americans give top priority to the traditional "basics" – math and English – as has been the case since these annual surveys were initiated; there is virtually unanimous agreement that these courses should be required of all high school students – both college-bound and non-college-bound. Several of the so-called "new basics" (i.e., science and computer science) are considered less important, though both have recorded gains since 1981, particularly computer science. Similarly, vocational training as a requirement for non-college-bound students has registered substantial gains. The issue of foreign language as a requirement for college-bound students, however, has made little progress in recent years. The number of Americans who feel that extracurricular activities are very important to a young person's education has dropped from 45% in 1978 to 31% today.
>
> The public appears to be unwilling to make some of the necessary sacrifices or commitments to help implement some of the recommendations of the school reform reports. Americans are opposed to extended school years or longer school days, which would provide the time for additional schooling. (Support for both ideas has increased somewhat in the last few years, however.) Furthermore, nonparents as well as parents oppose by a 2-1 margin the tougher college admission standards that are the logical extension of stricter standards at the elementary and high school levels.
>
> Although teachers oppose merit pay as a means of rewarding outstanding teaching performance by a margin of roughly 2-1, the public (including parents and nonparents) *favors* the idea by about 3-1. Among the half of the population who are familiar with merit pay, support rises to roughly 4-1.
>
> Approximately seven Americans in 10 favor school prayer – one of the most controversial issues facing the public schools today. At the same time, though the survey question omitted the word *voluntary*, a separate Gallup Poll measuring support for *voluntary* prayer shows some decline in support for the proposal.
>
> Although Americans have tended to favor Ronald Reagan as President over Walter Mondale, they feel that Mondale would be more likely than Reagan – by 42% to 34% – to improve the quality of education. In addition, 66% of Americans say that they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who favored increased federal spending for education; only 22% say that they would be less likely to vote for such a candidate.
>
> The American public continues to regard discipline as the most important problem facing the public schools; about one-fourth of Americans cite discipline as the predominant problem, as they have done for more than a decade. Our analysis indicates that this is probably an outcome of the public's exaggerated perceptions of specific disciplinary problems that occur in the schools – especially when these findings are compared to the testimony of those most likely to know the actual situation, the teachers. Half of the American public feels that drugs are used in the local schools "most of the time" or "fairly often." About one-third of the public feels that theft of money or personal property, drinking of alcoholic beverages, theft of school property, and carrying of knives or other weapons occur "most of the time" or "fairly often."

Rating of the Public Schools

In 1984 the downward trend in the public's rating of the public schools recorded in these surveys over a period of several years finally ended; 42% of those interviewed gave an A or B rating to the public schools in their communities, up sharply from 31% in 1983. Not since 1976 had these ratings been so high.

The higher rating given the schools may have resulted from two developments. First, the reports of the national commissions that examined schooling in America had caused widespread debate concerning the quality of public education. Citizens had taken a closer look at their own schools and presumably found them better than they had previously believed. Also, many schools had heeded the criticisms made in the reports and had instituted reforms in their educational programs.

It is noteworthy that parents also gave their schools a higher rating: 52% A or B, as opposed to 42% in 1983.

The question and the findings:

Students are often given the grades A,B,C,D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A,B,D,C, or FAIL?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
A rating	10	8	15	4
B rating	32	31	37	33
C rating	35	35	32	42
D rating	11	10	12	16
FAIL	4	5	3	4
Don't know	8	11	1	1

Ratings Given the Local Public Schools	National Totals								
	1984	1983	1982	1981	1980	1979	1978	1977	1976
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A rating	10	6	8	9	10	8	9	11	13
B rating	32	25	29	27	25	26	27	26	29
C rating	35	32	33	34	29	30	30	28	28
D rating	11	13	14	13	12	11	11	11	10
FAIL	4	7	5	7	6	7	8	5	6
Don't know	8	17	11	10	18	18	15	19	14

Rating of Public Schools Nationally

The 1984 survey also showed an upward trend in the public's rating of the public schools nationally. But, as the ratings indicate, respondents continued to give schools in their own communities higher marks than they gave the public schools nationally.

The question and the findings:

How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally — A,B,C,D, or FAIL?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
A rating	2	2	3	4
B rating	23	24	21	19
C rating	49	47	52	52
D rating	11	10	13	15
FAIL	4	4	2	4
Don't know	11	13	9	6

	Public Schools in the Nation			
	1984	1983	1982	1981
	%	%	%	%
A rating	2	2	2	2
B rating	23	17	20	18
C rating	49	38	44	43
D rating	11	16	15	15
FAIL	4	6	4	6
Don't know	11	21	15	16

Rating of Teachers in the Local Public Schools

The 1984 survey indicates that the public had increasing respect for the teachers in the local schools. Half of all respondents gave teachers an A or B rating. This is considerably higher than the rating given to teachers in the 1981 survey.

The highest ratings went to teachers in small communities – those with a population under 2,500. The lowest ratings went to teachers in the central cities, where the teaching problems are greatest.

Respondents living in the Midwest gave their teachers a slightly higher rating than citizens living in other areas of the U.S.

The question and the findings:

Now, what grade would you give the teachers in the public schools in this community?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
A rating	13	13	15	6
B rating	37	35	43	34
C rating	31	31	29	42
D rating	7	6	8	9
FAIL	3	3	3	1
Don't know	9	12	2	8

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984	1981
	%	%
A rating	13	11
B rating	37	28
C rating	31	31
D rating	7	9
FAIL	3	6
Don't know	9	15

Rating of Principals and Administrators in the Local Public Schools

The ratings given to school principals and other administrators were somewhat similar to those given to teachers. As in the case of teachers, the ratings in the 1984 survey were appreciably higher than those in the 1981 survey.

The question and the findings:

Now, what grade would you give the principals and administrators in the local public schools in this community?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
A rating	13	12	18	5
B rating	34	32	36	42
C rating	29	30	27	27
D rating	8	7	10	13
FAIL	5	5	5	6
Don't know	11	14	4	7

	1984	1981
NATIONAL TOTALS	%	%
A rating	13	10
B rating	34	26
C rating	29	28
D rating	8	12
FAIL	5	9
Don't know	11	15

Rating of the School Board in This Community

The 1984 survey, for the first time, rated school boards on the same scale as that employed to rate schools, teachers, administrators, and parents.

Understandably, those who have little contact with the public schools said that they did not know enough about their local school boards to assign a rating. Parents with children enrolled in either public or nonpublic schools rated school boards only slightly lower than they rated the schools themselves. The highest rating was given by respondents who had children enrolled in the public schools.

The question and the findings:

Now, what grade would you give the school board in this community?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
A rating	9	9	11	5
B rating	32	31	33	33
C rating	29	27	29	39
D rating	11	10	14	14
FAIL	6	6	8	5
Don't know	13	17	5	4

Rating Given to Parents of Students in the Public Schools

Parents of children attending the public schools were not highly pleased with the way public school parents bring up their children. In fact, they gave themselves, collectively, lower marks for the way they were doing their job than they gave teachers and school administrators.

Only 39% gave parents a grade of A or B. This contrasts with a figure of 58% for teachers and 54% for principals and other school administrators.

Parents with children attending nonpublic schools gave parents of public school students even lower grades. Only 29% gave public school parents an A or B rating; 26% gave them a D or FAIL rating.

The question and the findings:

Now, what grade would you give the parents of students in the local public schools for bringing up their children?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
A rating	7	6	9	6
B rating	26	25	30	23
C rating	36	36	35	40
D rating	16	15	19	16
FAIL	6	6	5	10
Don't know	9	12	2	5

	1984	1981*
NATIONAL TOTALS	%	%
A rating	7	5
B rating	26	24
C rating	36	36
D rating	16	16
FAIL	6	11
Don't know	9	8

*The wording of the question in the 1981 survey was: "What grade would you give parents in this community for the job they are doing in raising their children to be self-disciplined and responsible young people — A,B,C,D, or FAIL?"

The Goals of Education

The goals of education are difficult to separate from the goals of life. It is equally difficult to separate the responsibility of the schools for reaching these goals from that of other institutions in American life.

Nevertheless, the 1984 survey attempted to obtain some evidence of how the public rated the importance of many suggested goals. The ratings given to the goals listed reveal a pragmatic people who view education primarily as a means to economic success rather than intellectual development. Near the bottom of the list was the goal of appreciation of the arts and letters, learning as a lifetime program, and participation in the democratic process.

The goals are listed below on the basis of the number of respondents who gave a "10" (the highest rating) to the goal in question.

The question and the findings:

I am going to read a list of possible goals of education. I would like you to rate the importance of each goal on a scale of zero to 10. A zero means a goal is not at all important and should

not be part of the public school program. A 10 means a goal is the most important goal — before all others. A rating between zero and 10 means you consider the goal to be somewhere in between in importance.

	Highest Rating			
	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
To develop the ability to speak and write correctly	68	65	74	71
To develop standards of what is "right" and "wrong"	64	63	68	61
To develop an understanding about different kinds of jobs and careers, including their requirements and rewards	56	54	60	54
To develop skills needed to get jobs for those not planning to go to college	54	52	59	61
To develop the ability to use mathematics for everyday problems	54	52	56	60
To encourage respect for law and order, for obeying the rules of society	52	52	54	53
To help students make realistic plans for what they will do after high school graduation	52	50	56	43
To develop the ability to live in a complex and changing world	51	50	57	42
To develop the desire to excel	51	49	56	51
To develop the ability to think — creatively, objectively, analytically	51	49	55	58
To help develop good work habits, the ability to organize one's thoughts, the ability to concentrate	48	46	52	42
To prepare for college those who plan to attend college	46	43	53	57
To develop the ability to deal with adult responsibilities and problems, i.e., sex, marriage, parenting, personal finances, alcohol and drug abuse	46	44	49	43
To gain an understanding of science and technology	45	43	50	51
To help students get good/high-paying jobs	45	43	51	43
To help students overcome personal problems	45	42	51	45
To develop the ability to understand and use computers	43	41	47	51
To develop the ability to get along with different kinds of people	42	42	43	40
To gain knowledge about the world of today and yesterday (history, geography, civics)	42	40	46	39
To encourage the desire to continue learning throughout one's life	41	40	45	39
To develop respect for and understanding of other races, religions, nations, and cultures	39	39	39	39
To develop an appreciation for and participation in the arts, music, literature, theater, etc.	35	33	39	37
To develop an understanding of democracy and to promote participation in the political process	33	32	35	32
To develop an appreciation of the "good" things in life	32	33	32	24
To promote physical development through sports programs	20	19	23	19

Major Problems Confronting the Public Schools in 1984

Although discipline continued to be cited most frequently by respondents as the top problem with which their local schools must contend, parents with children enrolled in the public schools mentioned this problem significantly less often than in 1983.

In the 1983 survey, 29% of the parents interviewed named "discipline" as the biggest problem of their schools; 23% mentioned discipline in the 1984 survey. Since parents of children in school are likely to be best informed about discipline, their views must be given special credence.

The top five problems found in the 1983 study were also the top five problems cited in 1984. Next to discipline, "use of drugs" and "poor curriculum/poor standards" were mentioned most often. Tied for fourth place were "lack of proper financial support" and "difficulty getting good teachers."

The question and the findings:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the *public* schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Lack of discipline	27	28	23	36
Use of drugs	18	18	20	10
Poor curriculum/poor standards	15	16	14	18
Lack of proper financial support	14	12	17	13
Difficulty getting good teachers	14	13	15	13
Integration/busing	6	7	3	4
Teachers' lack of interest	5	4	6	7
Parents' lack of interest	5	5	6	7
Low teacher salaries	4	3	6	5
Pupils' lack of interest/ truancy	4	4	4	4
Drinking/alcoholism	4	3	5	5
Large schools/over-crowding	4	3	4	8
Lack of respect for teachers/other students	3	3	4	2
Problems with administration	3	3	2	4
Crime/vandalism	3	3	2	2
Mismanagement of funds	2	1	2	5
Lack of proper facilities	2	2	1	1
Moral standards	1	1	2	2
Teachers' strikes	1	1	1	2
Communication problems	1	1	2	1
Parental involvement with school activities	1	*	1	1
Lack of needed teachers	1	1	1	—
Fighting	1	*	2	—
Government interference	1	1	1	1
There are no problems	1	1	2	1
Miscellaneous	4	4	5	7
Don't know/ no answer	10	12	4	5

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)
*Less than one-half of 1%.

The Public's Perceptions About Discipline

One way to measure attitudes regarding discipline is to ask respondents how serious a problem discipline is in their schools. Not surprisingly, those most closely connected with schools – the parents of students – hold different views from non-parents about discipline and about many other problems with which the local schools must deal. Thus 29% of parents with children enrolled in the public schools said in 1984 that the discipline problem was "very serious." In answer to the same question, 36% of those who had no children in the public schools said that the discipline problem was "very serious."

The question and the findings:

How serious a problem would you say discipline is in the public schools in this community — very serious, fairly serious, not too serious, or not at all serious?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Very serious	34	36	29	32
Fairly serious	34	34	35	38
Not too serious	22	18	29	25
Not at all serious	4	3	6	3
No opinion	6	9	1	2

Gallup said:

One of the perennial problems facing the public schools is how to maintain good public relations. The media are prone to limit their coverage of news of the schools to what journalists describe as "spot" news – happenings or events that take place in the schools. Unfortunately, these stories usually concern vandalism, drugs, absenteeism, theft of school property, attacks on teachers, and the like. "Good news" is difficult to find and to report.

Consequently, the public receives a distorted picture of schools and tends to regard them as blackboard jungles. Evidence of this comes from a question that asked respondents to estimate how often certain disciplinary problems occur in their local schools.

Analysis reveals that the perception of schools as blackboard jungles is likely to result from an exaggerated idea of the specific disciplinary problems that occur in a school system; this is certainly true when the perceptions of the public are compared with those of teachers, who are most likely to know the actual situation.

For example, as many of half of the respondents in this year's survey feel that drugs are used in their local schools "most of the time" or "fairly often." Similarly, about one-third of the public feel that theft of money or personal property, drinking of alcoholic beverages, theft of school property, and carrying of knives or other weapons occur "most of the time" or "fairly often."

The question and the findings:

As I read off the following problems by letter, would you tell me how often you think each problem occurs in the public schools in this community — just your impression?

NATIONAL TOTALS	Most of the Time or Fairly Often %	Not Very Often or Almost Never/ Never %	Don't Know %
Schoolwork and homework assignments not completed	64	23	13
Behavior that disrupts class	60	29	11
Skipping classes	56	31	13
Talking back to/disobeying teachers	56	32	12
Truancy/being absent from school	53	36	11
Use of drugs at school	53	33	14
Selling of drugs at school	47	37	16

	Most of the Time or Fairly Often %	Not Very Often or Almost Never/ Never %	Don't Know %
Sloppy or inappropriate dress	47	42	11
Cheating on tests	46	38	16
Vandalizing of school property	39	49	12
Stealing money or personal property belonging to other students, teachers, or staff	38	46	16
Drinking alcoholic beverages at school	35	50	15
Theft of school property	34	51	15
Carrying of knives, firearms, or other weapons at school	29	55	16
Sexual activity at school	24	57	19
Racial fights between whites, blacks, Hispanics, or other minorities	22	64	14
Taking money or property by force, using weapons or threats	18	66	16
Physical attacks on teachers or staff	15	71	14

Subjects the Public Would Require

In 1984 mathematics and English headed the list of subjects the public would require of high school students who planned to attend college; mathematics was mentioned by 96% of respondents, and English was mentioned by 94%.

In addition, a large majority would require history/U.S. government and science. Slightly fewer, but still a majority, would require courses in business, foreign language, and health education.

For *non*-college-bound students, the public would also require math and English and by virtually the same percentages as for those planning to go to college. Somewhat fewer respondents felt that history and science should be required of non-college-bound students, and far fewer favored a foreign language requirement.

Not surprisingly, a much larger percentage of Americans felt that vocational training should be required for non-college-bound students than for those planning to go to college. Similarly, business as a required course was favored by a slightly larger percentage for non-college-bound students.

Support for computer science as a required course – for both college- and non-college-bound students – had dramatically increased, from 43% to 68%, in just three years. Although support for a science requirement for non-college-bound students had risen only marginally, support for a science requirement for those planning to go to college had risen from 76% to 84% since 1981. On the other hand, support for a foreign language for college-bound students had made little progress in the past three years.

The questions and the findings:

Would you look over this card, which lists high school subjects. If you were the one to decide, what subjects would you require every public high school student who *plans to go on to college* to take?

What about those public high school students who *do not plan to go to college* when they graduate? Which courses would you require them to take?

	Should Be Required	
	For Those Planning to Go to College %	For Those Not Planning to Go to College %
Mathematics	96	92
English	94	90
History/U.S. government	84	71
Science	84	61
Business	68	76
Foreign language	57	19
Health education	52	50
Physical education	43	44
Vocational education	37	83
Art	24	18
Music	22	18

	Should Be Required					
	For Those Planning to Go to College			For Those Not Planning to Go to College		
	1984 %	1983 %	1981 %	1984 %	1983 %	1981 %
Mathematics	96	92	94	92	87	91
English	94	88	91	90	83	89
History/U.S. government	84	78	83	71	63	71
Science	84	76	76	61	53	58
Business	68	55	60	76	65	75
Foreign language	57	50	54	19	19	21
Health education	52	43	47	50	42	46
Physical education	43	41	44	44	40	43
Vocational training	37	32	34	83	74	64
Art	24	19	28	18	16	20
Music	22	18	26	18	16	20

Special Areas of Instruction that Should Be Required

In 1984 the public favored public school instruction in many aspects of modern life in addition to the subjects traditionally included in the school curriculum. Heading the list of these special areas of instruction was drug abuse, followed by alcohol abuse. Large majorities of the population also favored required instruction in such areas as driver education, computer training, race relations, and the dangers of nuclear war.

The question and the findings:

In addition to regular courses, high schools offer instruction in other areas. As I read off these areas, one at a time, would you tell me whether you feel this instruction should be required or should not be required for all high school students.

	Should Be Required	Should Not Be Required	No Opinion
	%	%	%
Drug abuse	82	15	3
Alcohol abuse	79	18	3
Driver education	73	25	2
Computer training	68	28	4
Race relations	65	29	6
Dangers of nuclear waste	61	34	5
Communism/socialism	57	37	6
Parenting/parent training	55	39	6
Dangers of nuclear war	51	43	6

	Should Be Required		
	1984	1983	1981
	%	%	%
Drug abuse	82	81	82
Alcohol abuse	79	76	78
Driver education	73	72	71
Computer training	68	72	43
Race relations*	65	56	–
Dangers of nuclear waste*	61	56	–
Communism/socialism*	57	51	–
Parenting/parent training	55	58	64
Dangers of nuclear war*	51	46	–

*These topics were not included in the 1981 survey.

Importance of Extracurricular Activities

In 1984 about three-quarters of the U.S. public (77%) felt that extracurricular activities were either "very important" or "fairly important" to a young person's education. At the same time, however, there was a decline in the percentage of those who said that extracurricular activities are "very important" – from 45% in 1978 to 31% in 1984. During this same period there was an increase in the percentage of the public who said that extracurricular activities are "not too important" – from 9% to 18%. This decrease in support may reflect, to some extent, the heavy emphasis placed on the academic curriculum by various national reports on the state of education.

Better-educated Americans were more inclined to feel that extracurricular activities are important. A total of 84% of those who had attended college said that these activities are "very important" or "fairly important," while only 68% of those whose education ended with grade school regarded such activities as important.

The question and the findings:

I'd like your opinion about extracurricular activities such as the school band, dramatics, sports, and the school paper. How important are these to a young person's education — very important, fairly important, not too important, or not at all important?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Very important	31	31	32	30
Fairly important	46	45	48	52
Not too important	18	18	16	14
Not at all important	4	4	3	3
No opinion	1	2	1	1

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1978 %
Very important	31	45
Fairly important	46	40
Not too important	18	9
Not at all important	4	4
No opinion	1	2

Course Credit for Community Service

Widespread approval was found in this survey for a proposal to award course credit to high school juniors and seniors for community service, such as working in a hospital or recreation center, beautifying parks, or helping law enforcement officers.

This proposal was first included in this survey series in 1978. At that time, 87% said that they would like such a plan to be adopted in their own community. In the 1984 survey, 79% approved of this plan. However, the approval rating among parents of children attending the public schools remained about the same (86%) as in the earlier survey.

Every group in the population gave a high approval rating to this proposal, which was strongly endorsed in Ernest Boyer's 1983 report, *High School*, an important study by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

The question and the findings:

A plan has been suggested to enable all juniors and seniors in high school to perform some kind of community service for course credit — such as working in a hospital or recreation center, beautifying parks, or helping law enforcement officers. Would you like to have such a plan adopted in this community, or not?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, would like plan	79	77	86	78
No, would not	16	17	12	16
No opinion	5	6	2	6

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1978 %
Yes, would like plan	79	87
No, would not	16	8
No opinion	5	5

Nongraded Schools

The idea that a student should be allowed to progress through the school system at his or her own speed and without regard to grade level again won majority support in 1984, though acceptance of this plan by the public was less overwhelming than in earlier surveys.

The nongraded concept was more popular with better-educated citizens, with younger citizens, and with parents of children in nonpublic schools. It was most popular in the large cities and least popular in the small communities of the U.S.

The question and the findings:

Should a student be able to progress through the school system at his own speed and without regard to the usual grade level? This would mean that he might study seventh-grade math, but only fifth-grade English. Would you favor or oppose such a plan in the local schools?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	54	51	58	63
Oppose	39	40	36	33
No opinion	7	9	6	4

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1980 %	1975 %	1972 %
Favor	54	62	64	71
Oppose	39	30	28	22
No opinion	7	8	8	7

Automatic Promotion

All segments of the population continued in 1984 to oppose the idea of automatic promotion. By a ratio of nearly three to one, they preferred that students be promoted from grade to grade only if they could pass examinations.

Greatest resistance to automatic promotion was found in the Western states and in the larger cities.

When the same question was asked in the 1978 survey, the answers were virtually the same, with 68% opposed and 27% in favor of automatic promotion.

The question and the findings:

Should children be promoted from grade to grade *only* if they can pass examinations?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	71	73	66	73
No	25	23	31	23
No opinion	4	4	3	4

Who Should Determine the Curriculum?

If the public were given the right to decide who should have the greatest influence in deciding what is taught in the public schools, the top choices in 1984 would have been the local school board and parents; the public would have given the state government and the federal government relatively little say in this matter.

This view is in sharp contrast to the policies followed in most nations, where the national government typically sets the curriculum.

The question and the findings:

In your opinion, who should have the *greatest* influence in deciding what is taught in the public schools here — the federal government, the state government, the local school board, local public school teachers, or parents of public school children?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Local school board	27	29	25	29
Parents	24	22	30	23
State government	17	18	14	16
Teachers	11	11	11	12
Federal government	9	9	9	4
Don't know	12	11	11	16

Tax Increases to Support the Public Schools

Since the spring of 1983, when the National Commission on Excellence in Education presented its report, a slight increase was registered in the percentage of citizens who favored a tax increase in situations where the schools claim to need much more money.

The percentage of public school parents who favored such a tax increase rose from 48% in 1983 to 54% in 1984, while the percentage of those opposed dropped from 45% to 38%.

Those respondents who had attended college were most in favor of tax increases. When sections of the U.S. were compared, residents of the Western states were found most in favor of raising taxes to help the schools.

The question and the findings:

Suppose the local public schools said they needed much more money. As you feel at this time, would you vote to raise taxes for this purpose, or would you vote against raising taxes for this purpose?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
For raise in taxes	41	37	54	42
Against raise in taxes	47	50	38	51
Don't know	12	13	8	7

	Financial Support of the Public Schools		
NATIONAL TOTALS	Favor Raising Taxes %	Opposed to Raising Taxes %	Don't Know %
1984 survey	41	47	12
1983 survey	39	52	9
1981 survey	30	60	10

Prayer in the Public Schools

Prayer in the public schools is an issue that has been hotly debated in recent years. A majority of those interviewed in the 1984 survey favored a constitutional amendment that would allow school prayer. However, the least support for such an amendment was found among the best-educated

citizens and among the youngest adult age group. Gallup remarked that these two groups would play the greatest role in determining future trends in public attitudes.

The question and the findings:

Have you heard or read about a proposed Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow prayer in the public schools?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	93	93	95	93
No	6	7	4	7
Not sure	1	*	1	–

*Less than one-half of 1%.

The question:

Do you favor or oppose this proposed Amendment?

Those Aware of Amendment	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	69	68	73	68
Oppose	24	25	21	21
Don't know	7	7	6	11

The question:

How strongly do you favor/oppose this Amendment — very strongly, fairly strongly, or not at all strongly?

Those Who Favor the Amendment	National Totals
	%
Very strongly	61
Fairly strongly	34
Not at all strongly	5
Can't say	*

Those Who Oppose the Amendment	National Totals
	%
Very strongly	49
Fairly strongly	38
Not at all strongly	12
Can't say	1

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Increasing the Length of the School Year

In 1984, public sentiment in favor of increasing the length of the school year by one month appeared to be growing. In the 1982 survey a total of 37% approved of this plan. In 1983 approval reached 40%; in the 1984 survey the comparable figure was 44%. However, 50% in the 1984 survey still opposed this plan.

Those most in favor of a longer school year were residents of cities with populations over one million. Most opposed were people living in smaller cities and in towns of 2,500 and under.

Those who had attended college favored a longer school year by a margin of 51% to 45%. Residents of the Western states also approved a longer school year by a margin of 59% to 35%.

The question and the findings:

In some nations, students attend school as many as 240 days a year as compared to 180 days in the U.S. How do you feel about extending the public school year in this community by 30 days, making the school year about 210 days or 10 months long? Do you favor or oppose this idea?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	44	44	45	46
Oppose	50	49	52	46
No opinion	6	7	3	8

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984	1983	1982
	%	%	%
Favor	44	40	37
Oppose	50	49	53
No opinion	6	11	10

Extending the School Day by One Hour

Although 1984 findings indicated that the public was slightly more in favor of increasing the length of the school day by one hour than in 1982, a majority remained opposed.

Residents of the Western states and the largest cities most strongly favored the longer school day. Residents of the Midwest were the most opposed.

The question and the findings:

How do you feel about extending the school day in the schools in this community by one hour? Do you favor or oppose this idea?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	42	42	41	38
Oppose	52	51	56	58
No opinion	6	7	3	4

Raising College Requirements

Many educators argue that raising the entrance requirements of colleges and universities is an effective way of inducing the public schools to raise their standards. However, this proposal failed to win public approval in 1984.

Analysis of the opinions of various groups in the population revealed that all major groups opposed this suggestion, especially those most concerned: parents of children attending elementary or high school. Even those who had attended college voted against the idea.

The question and the findings:

Do you feel that four-year colleges and universities should raise their entrance requirements or not?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	27	28	24	21
No	59	57	64	61
No opinion	14	15	12	18

National Test for Graduation

In 1984 the American public showed remarkable unanimity in favoring a standard nationwide test for graduation from high school. Only in communities under 2,500 was sentiment fairly closely divided on this proposal.

This question was first asked of a national cross-section of adults in 1958, and the idea was favored at that time by a margin of 50% to 39%. When the same question was asked in 1981, 69% favored the proposal, 26% opposed it, and 5% had no opinion. Roughly the same results were found in 1984: 65% in favor, 29% opposed, and 6% with no opinion.

Many nations require students to pass standard examinations for graduation; in the United States, however, because of varying local conditions, such a plan has never been adopted. Nevertheless, the public appears to see merit in such a policy.

The question and the findings:

Should all high school students in the United States be required to pass a standard nationwide examination in order to get a high school diploma?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	65	65	65	59
No	29	29	29	35
No opinion	6	6	6	6

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1981 %	1976 %	1958 %
Yes	65	69	65	50
No	29	26	31	39
No opinion	6	5	4	11

Amount of Schoolwork Required of Elementary and High School Students

All segments of the U.S. population agreed in 1984 that students in elementary schools and high schools were not made to work hard enough in school or on homework. This opinion had remained fairly constant in three surveys, the first in 1975.

Only 5% of those interviewed in 1984 thought students are made to work too hard in elementary school, and only 4% thought students in high school were made to work too hard. By contrast, 59% said that students were not required to work hard enough in elementary school, and 67% said that they were not required to work hard enough in high school.

Perhaps the best judges of whether students are being given enough schoolwork to do in school and at home are the parents of these students. Parents agreed that their children were not being required to work hard enough. Only 7% of parents with children enrolled in the public schools said that children in elementary school were required to work too hard; 54% said that they were not required to work hard enough. In the case of high school students, 5% of parents with children enrolled in public schools said that children were required to work too hard; 62% said that they are not required to work hard enough.

The question and the findings:

In general, do you think *elementary* schoolchildren in the public schools here are made to work too hard in school and on homework or not hard enough?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Too hard	5	5	7	4
Not hard enough	59	60	54	56
About right amount	24	20	34	30
Don't know	12	15	5	10

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1983 %	1975 %
Too hard	5	4	5
Not hard enough	59	61	49
About right amount	24	19	28
Don't know	12	16	18

What about students in the public *high schools* here — in general, are they required to work too hard or not hard enough?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Too hard	4	4	5	–
Not hard enough	67	69	62	69
About right amount	18	15	25	22
Don't know	11	12	8	9

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1983 %	1975 %
Too hard	4	3	3
Not hard enough	67	65	54
About right amount	18	12	22
Don't know	11	20	21

Education in America's Future

In 1984 the American public was strongly in favor of developing the best educational system in the world. In fact, U.S. citizens believed – as they did in 1982, when this question was first asked – that education would be more important in determining America's place in the world 25 years later than our industrial system or our military might.

The question and the findings:

In determining America's strength in the future — say, 25 years from now — how important do you feel each of the following factors will be — very important, fairly important, not too important, or not at all important?

	Very Important %	Fairly Important %	Not Too Important %	Not At All Important %	Don't Know %
Developing the best educational system in the world	82	13	2	1	2
Developing the most efficient industrial production system in the world	70	23	3	1	3
Building the strongest military force in the world	45	36	13	3	3

Teaching as a Career

Although teaching as a career had lost favor steadily in the Seventies and early Eighties, results from the 1984 survey indicated that the downward trend had ended. In 1969, 75% of parents said that they would like to see one of their children enter public school teaching as a career. In 1983 only 45% said this.

In the 1984 survey, the question differed from that asked in 1969 and 1983, which dealt with "a child of yours." The question now asked respondents first if they would like a daughter to take up teaching as a career; the same question was then asked about a son.

Fully 50% of those interviewed said that they would like a daughter to take up teaching in the public schools as a career. Slightly fewer (46%) said they would like a son to make a career of teaching.

The question and the findings:

Would you like to have a *daughter* of yours take up teaching in the public schools as a career?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	50	49	54	46
No	39	40	34	35
No opinion	11	11	12	19

Would you like to have a *son* of yours take up teaching in the public schools as a career?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	46	45	51	41
No	42	43	37	40
No opinion	12	12	12	19

	Daughter		Son	
NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1981 %	1984 %	1981 %
Yes	50	46	46	43
No	39	44	42	47
Don't know	11	10	12	10

Attitudes Toward Merit Pay Programs

Although the issue of merit pay for teachers provoked a great deal of discussion in the early Eighties, when the 1984 survey was conducted only half of those interviewed said that they heard or read anything about such programs.

When those who said that they were aware of merit pay proposals were asked whether they generally favored or opposed the idea, three-fourths (76%) said that they approved of it, 19% were opposed, and 5% had no opinion. For the total sample, the percentage who approved of the idea of merit pay was 65%, with 22% opposed and 13% having no opinion.

In 1970 and again in 1983 a merit pay question was asked in this form: "Should each teacher be paid on the basis of the quality of his or her work, or should all teachers be paid on a standard-scale basis?" In 1970, 58% said that teachers should be paid according to "quality of work," 36% on a "standard scale," and 6% said "don't know." Comparable figures for 1983 were 61%, 31%, and 8%.

The questions and the findings:

Some states have recently adopted merit pay programs which would provide additional pay for outstanding teacher performance. Have you heard or read anything about these programs?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	51	50	55	56
No	45	46	42	42
Don't know	4	4	3	2

How do you, yourself, feel about the idea of merit pay for teachers? In general, do you favor or oppose it?

Total Sample	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	65	63	69	75
Oppose	22	23	20	14
No opinion	13	14	11	11

Those Who Have Heard or Read About Merit Pay for Teachers	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	76	75	77	81
Oppose	19	20	19	10
No opinion	5	5	4	9

Criteria to Be Used in Awarding Merit Pay

One of the greatest hurdles facing merit pay has always been the difficulty of agreeing on the criteria to be used in deciding which teachers should receive extra pay. A list of possible criteria was compiled for the 1984 survey. To determine which criteria were most acceptable to the public, respondents were asked in the case of each criterion whether they thought it should or should not be used to decide which teachers should be given additional pay.

Seven criteria are listed below in order of their acceptability to the public in 1984. Improvement achieved by students as measured by standardized tests was rated highest. Virtually the same rating was given to evaluations by administrators. Gaining almost the same high approval was an advanced degree, such as the master's or Ph.D. Evaluation by other teachers, length of teaching experience, students' evaluations, and parents' opinions had support, but not majority support.

The question and the findings:

This card lists possible criteria for giving additional pay to teachers for special merit. As I read off each one by letter, please tell me if you think it should or should not be used to determine which teachers should receive merit pay.

	Should Be Criterion %	Should Not Be Criterion %	No Opinion %
Academic achievement or improvement of students (as measured by standardized tests	68	25	7
Administrators' evaluations	67	26	7
An advanced degree, such as a master's or Ph.D.	66	27	7
Evaluation by other teachers in the system	48	42	10
Length of teaching experience	48	47	5
Students' evaluations	45	47	8
Parents' opinions	36	55	9

Paying Math and Science Teachers More

Between 1981 and 1984, the idea of paying higher wages to teachers of science, math, and technical and vocational subjects gained slightly in public approval. However, only in the largest cities did the percentage reach 50% or higher.

When the same question was asked in 1983, national totals were 50% in favor, 35% opposed, and 15% don't know.

The question and the findings:

Today there is a shortage of teachers in science, math, technical subjects, and vocational subjects. If your local schools needed teachers in these subjects, would you favor or oppose paying them higher wages than teachers of other subjects?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	48	46	52	56
Oppose	43	43	42	37
No opinion	9	11	6	7

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1981 %
Favor	48	50
Oppose	43	35
No opinion	9	15

Teachers' Salaries in This Community

The American public tends to feel that teachers' salaries are too low. Interestingly, this view is held by those who do not have children enrolled in the public schools, as well as by those who do.

On the other hand, those who have no children in the local schools are more likely to vote against tax increases and bond issues for the schools than those who have children enrolled.

From 1969 to 1984, attitudes concerning teachers' salaries showed little change. The weight of opinion throughout this period was that salaries are too low. This opinion was particularly prevalent among more highly educated citizens and among those who live in the Southern states, where teacher salaries tend to be lowest.

The question:

Do you think salaries in this community for teachers are too high, too low, or just about right?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Too high	7	6	8	7
Too low	37	37	38	33
Just about right	41	40	41	47
No opinion	15	17	13	13

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1983 %	1981 %	1969 %
Too high	7	8	10	2
Too low	37	35	29	33
About right	41	31	41	43
No opinion	15	26	20	22

NATIONAL TOTALS (with "no opinion" group eliminated)	1984 %	1983 %	1981 %	1969 %
Too high	8	11	13	3
Too low	44	47	36	42
About right	48	42	51	55

State Board Examinations for Teachers

Survey findings in 1984 revealed widespread agreement that prospective teachers should be required to pass state board examinations to prove their knowledge in the subjects they plan to teach.

More than eight in every 10 respondents favored this policy in the three surveys in which this same question was asked: 1979, 1981, and 1984.

The question and the findings:

In addition to meeting college requirements for a teacher's certificate, should those who want to become teachers also be required to pass a state board examination to prove their knowledge in the subjects they will teach before they are hired?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	89	89	89	92
No	7	7	8	7
No opinion	4	4	3	1

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1981 %	1979 %
Yes	89	84	85
No	7	11	9
No opinion	4	5	6

Career Ladder for Teachers

The proposal to adopt a career ladder for public school teachers that is grounded in classroom effectiveness, with accompanying salary increases, was favored by a substantial majority (75%) of the public in 1984. In fact, by approximately the same percentages, all segments of the population agreed that this is a good plan.

The question and the findings:

It has been suggested that public schools adopt a career ladder for teachers, based primarily upon demonstrated effectiveness in the classroom, with salaries increasing accordingly. Would you approve or disapprove if such a plan were adopted by the public schools in this community?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Approve	75	74	77	79
Disapprove	16	16	16	16
No opinion	9	10	7	5

Likelihood of Voting for Candidate Supporting Increased Spending for Education

A measure of the public's willingness to spend more on education was yielded by a question asking whether respondents would be more or less likely to vote for a Presidential candidate who favors increased spending for education.

In 1984 two-thirds of Americans (66%) said they would be more likely to vote for the candidate supporting increased spending. Only a third as many (22%) said they would be less likely to vote for this candidate.

The question and the findings:

Would you be more likely or less likely to vote for a candidate who says he would increase federal spending for education?

	National Totals
	%
More likely	66
Less likely	22
Don't know	12

Presidential Candidate Perceived to Support Education More

At the time interviewing was conducted for the 1984 survey, Ronald Reagan held a wide lead in a Presidential trial heat against Walter Mondale (54% to 39%).

Despite this apparent preference for President Reagan, when the public was asked which candidate, Reagan or Mondale, would be more likely to improve the quality of education in the U.S., Mondale was named by a larger percentage than the President – 42% to 34%. Nearly a quarter of the public registered no opinion.

The question and the findings:

Which Presidential candidate do you feel would be more likely, as President, to improve the quality of public education in the U.S. — Ronald Reagan or Walter Mondale?

	National Totals
	%
Walter Mondale	42
Ronald Reagan	34
No opinion	24

Chapter 18
The Seventeenth Annual Poll, 1985

Events of the Year in Education

President Reagan appointed William J. Bennett Secretary of Education, succeeding Terrel Bell. His appointment was welcomed guardedly by most education leaders, primarily because they saw Bennett as a conservative unfriendly to public schools. But Bennett was not dismayed by the cool reception. He announced 10 critical issues in education that the American people should be working on and said the federal government would not only encourage discussion of these issues but also would provide limited fiscal resources for their solution.

Among the issues Bennett identified were these: What should children learn? Where will good teachers come from and how should they be rewarded? What standards should govern higher education? What American values should be stressed in our classrooms? How can the reform movement be kept going, yet remain in the control of local people? How can we give principals continuing education and the kind of authority and support they need? How can we implement one of the major aims of education, development of character? Do minority students need the same type of education as all other students? What do we still have to learn about the process of learning and teaching? How do we insure unabated efforts to improve education?

Good, educators responded. But what else was on Bennett's mind? Soon Bennett revealed that he wanted to advance tuition tax credits, the use of vouchers, reduced federal budgets for schools, and a constitutional amendment permitting prayer in public schools. He showed himself a strong advocate of nonpublic schools and criticized public school teachers for inadequate teaching of history, among other faults. Leaders in Washington said that Bennett was more interested in higher education than in elementary and secondary schools. Not at all disturbed, Bennett continually promoted his three C's – content, character, choice – and quoted Aristotle, Socrates, and the Federalist Papers to support his educational ideology.

If ever there was a honeymoon for Bennett and organized education in Washington, it came to an end after the first eight months. A coalition of 18 national education groups decried the Secretary's "constant flow of negative and inflammatory statements about public education." They were particularly critical of Bennett's statements that the public schools were a monopoly and that the voucher system and tuition tax credits would give parents the power to break that monopoly.

Teaching students to think and reason, an elusive goal of education for generations, became a prime topic for teachers and administrators during the year. Interest in developing thinking and reasoning skills was fueled by researchers, educational associations, and publishers of materials for students and teachers.

The rationale for teaching students to think was stated as follows: As a society we are leaving the industrial stage with its emphasis on manufacturing, farming, mining, and other goods-producing occupations. We are moving into an "information society," in which knowledge and facts will be main products. This type of society needs people with critical minds to manage, digest, and apply facts. If the United States is to maintain its position as a leader of technology, production, and defense, we must have school programs emphasizing critical thinking skills.

A barrage of books, monographs, research studies, and magazine articles came from education presses exploring the many facets of teaching thinking. More than two dozen major education associations formed a Collaborative on Teaching Thinking to support the movement. State departments of education began developing suggested courses of study to help school districts with this difficult and relatively new discipline. A score of large, wealthy school districts started "thinking skills" programs without waiting for state help. Commercial publishers placed on the market scores of packages carrying such names as "Philosophy for Children," "HOTS" (Higher Order Thinking Skills), and "Talents Unlimited."

Administrators, curriculum workers, and teachers venturing to teach thinking skills faced three main questions: 1) Should instruction in thinking skills be conducted as an independent program or should it be incorporated with, and carried on through, such subjects as math, science, social studies, and English? 2) Should instructional materials be developed by the school district or should administrators purchase them in the market place? 3) How can schools justify to the public and boards of education the inclusion of yet another subject in an already crowded curriculum? Even the most ardent proponents of thinking skills programs said it would take years to find answers.

A good many of the nation's teachers and curriculum directors had become intrigued during the year with the brain's asymmetry. The human brain is divided into two halves or hemispheres, each with specialized functions. The left hemisphere, according to authoritative theorists, directs and controls our verbal and analytical functions; the right hemisphere is concerned with creative efforts. Articles in popular magazines as well as the education press explored this theory. Speakers at education conventions drew more than ordinarily large audiences during the year with lectures on "How to Teach to the Right Brain," or ". . .to the Left Brain."

Proponents of the right/left brain concept often insisted that our entire education system is grossly inadequate because it is geared to teach only one-half of the brain, the side that is verbal and analytical, ignoring the creative half. They called for an overhaul of our curriculum and educational programs to permit development of the neglected hemisphere.

At stake, right/left brain enthusiasts claimed, is the foundation of our society. We cannot afford to waste brain power at a time when society needs creative solutions to difficult problems.

Even as these concepts gained a high popularity in 1985, well-qualified scientists began to tell their side of the story. Significant was the publication during the year of *Left Brain, Right Brain*, by S.P. Springer and G. Deutch. These two scientists summed up the latest research on the brain and its functions. The gist of it all, supported by most neurologists, was as follows:

– The claim that as a society we educate only one hemisphere is clearly wrong. By all of our current measures, both hemispheres are active and involved in any situation.

– While it is true that there are hemispheric specializations, it is not true that presenting tasks for which one hemisphere is specialized builds up that hemisphere at the expense of the other. Moreover, there is little evidence that the right hemisphere is specialized for creativity.

Dr. Springer repeated on a number of occasions: "Those who would modify our educational systems based on our knowledge of brain asymmetry are on shaky grounds. Their ideas have no support from research."

Poll Findings

The purpose of Phi Delta Kappa, as stated in its constitution, is to promote high quality education, *with particular emphasis on publicly supported education*, as essential to a democratic way of life. It is for this reason that these polls have continued to monitor public attitudes toward developments that educators generally consider elitist or in some way inimical to publicly supported education. The following three questions asked in 1985 fit this monitoring function.

Private and Church-Related Schools

In 1985 the U.S. public felt that a recent increase in the number of nonpublic (private and church-related) schools was good for the nation. The public approved the increase by a 2 to 1 ratio (55% to 27%), a slightly higher margin of approval than in 1981, the last time this question was asked.

The question and the findings:

In recent years, the number of nonpublic schools, that is, private and church-related schools, has increased in many parts of the country. In general, do you think this increase in nonpublic schools is a good thing or a bad thing for the nation?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Good thing	55	54	56	71
Bad thing	27	27	28	21
No opinion	18	19	16	8

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985	1981
	%	%
Good thing	55	49
Bad thing	27	30
No opinion	18	21

Support for Vouchers

In 1985 the U.S. public supported the adoption of a voucher system by a narrow margin (45% to 40%). This represented a slight decline from the peak of approval for vouchers in 1983, when 51% of the public favored a voucher plan and only 38% opposed it.

The question and the findings:

In some nations, the government allots a certain amount of money for each child for his education. The parents can send the child to any public, parochial, or private school they choose. This is called the "voucher system." Would you like to see such an idea adopted in this country?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	45	42	49	63
Oppose	40	40	41	32
No opinion	15	18	10	5

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985	1983	1981	1971	1970
	%	%	%	%	%
Favor	45	51	43	38	43
Oppose	40	38	41	44	46
No opinion	15	11	16	18	11

Home Schools

Although in 1985 the U.S. public seemed to view private and church-related schools in an increasingly favorable light, the same cannot be said of home schooling. Only 16% of the public thought that the still-minor movement toward home schooling was good for the nation; 73% viewed this trend as a bad thing.

The question and the findings:

Recently there has been a movement toward "home schools," that is, schools where parents keep their children at home and teach the children themselves. In general, do you think this movement is a good thing or a bad thing for the nation?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Good thing	16	16	14	22
Bad thing	73	72	75	71
Don't know	11	12	11	7

Standards for Nonpublic and Home Schools

Large majorities of the U.S. public would require both the private and church-related schools and the home schools to meet the same standards for accreditation and teacher certification as the nation's public schools must meet. In 1985, 90% of the public favored the same standards for private and church-related schools as for public schools, and 82% favored the same requirements for home schools.

It is interesting that *nonpublic school parents* were as much in favor of requiring the same standards for private and church-related schools and for home schools as were the general public and the parents of public school children.

The questions and the findings:

Do you think that the nonpublic schools should or should not be required to meet the same teacher certification and accrediting standards as the public schools?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Should	90	90	91	91
Should not	6	6	6	8
Don't know	4	4	3	1

Do you think that the "home schools" should or should not be required to meet the same teacher certification standards as the public schools?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Should	82	81	84	87
Should not	10	10	11	9
Don't know	8	9	5	4

1985 Rating of the Public Schools

In 1985 the public rated the public schools as favorably as it rated them in 1984, when the schools achieved the highest grades for performance in a decade.

Forty-three percent of those interviewed gave the public schools in their communities a grade of A or B – a figure statistically equal to the 42% who gave their local public schools a grade of A or B in 1984. In 1984 ratings were up sharply over 1983, when only 31% of respondents gave their local public schools a grade of A or B.

Three respondents in 10 said that their local schools deserved a grade of C. Only 14% said that the public schools in their communities deserved a grade of D or FAIL.

As has always been the case, those individuals most closely in touch with the public schools tended again in 1985 to perceive the local public schools more favorably. Among respondents with children attending public schools, 52% gave the public schools in their communities a grade of A or B. Among respondents with no children in school, only 39% gave the local public schools a grade of A or B.

The question and the findings:

Students are often given the grades of A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
A	9	9	6	4
B	34	30	44	29
C	30	30	33	31
D	10	10	9	23
FAIL	4	4	4	7
Don't know	13	17	2	6

	A	B	C	D	FAIL	Don't Know
	%	%	%	%	%	%
NATIONAL TOTALS	**9**	**34**	**30**	**10**	**4**	**13**
Sex						
Men	8	33	32	11	3	13
Women	10	34	29	10	5	12
Race						
White	9	34	30	10	4	13
Nonwhite	7	35	32	10	8	8
Age						
18 to 29 years	5	27	33	15	5	15
30 to 49 years	7	39	32	9	5	8
50 years and over	14	32	27	9	3	15
Education						
College	9	33	29	11	5	13
High school	8	34	32	10	5	11
Grade school	14	30	26	8	4	18
Income						
$40,000 and over	9	39	30	12	4	6
$30,000 - $39,999	8	39	32	7	4	10
$20,000 - $29,999	8	34	34	9	4	11
$10,000 - $19,999	8	32	29	13	5	13
Under $10,000	12	26	27	10	4	21
Community Size						
1 million and over	8	28	29	13	8	14
500,000 - 999,999	13	30	37	10	*	10
50,000 - 499,999	8	36	29	11	3	13
2,500 - 49,999	11	41	30	10	1	7
Under 2,500	10	37	32	6	2	13
Central city	6	27	33	14	8	12
Region						
East	7	34	28	12	5	14
Midwest	12	38	30	7	2	11
South	9	33	28	10	5	15
West	6	28	37	13	6	10

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Rating of Public Schools Nationally

Respondents continued to give schools in their own communities higher grades than they gave the public schools nationally. In 1985, 27% of the public gave the public schools nationally a grade of A or B – the highest percentage since this question was first asked in 1974. However, the 1985 figure is statistically equal to the 25% who gave the public schools nationally a grade of A or B in 1984.

The question and the findings:

How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
A	3	4	4	1
B	24	22	28	22
C	43	43	42	47
D	12	11	14	19
FAIL	3	3	2	6
Don't know	15	17	10	5

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985	1984	1983	1982	1981
	%	%	%	%	%
A	3	2	2	2	2
B	24	23	17	20	18
C	43	49	38	44	43
D	12	11	16	15	15
FAIL	3	4	6	4	6
Don't know	15	11	21	15	16

Rating of Public Schools Their Children Attend

When parents are asked to rate the schools their own children attend – the schools with which they are presumably most familiar – the grades they assign are appreciably higher. Almost three-quarters (71%) of the parents gave their children's schools a grade of A or B in 1985. Nineteen percent assigned a grade of C, and only 7% assigned a grade of D or FAIL.

An overwhelming 84% of parents whose children were performing at an above-average academic level gave their children's schools a grade of A or B. Even among parents of average or below-average students, 60% gave their children's schools an A or a B.

The question and the findings:

Using the A, B, C, D, and FAIL scale again, what grade would you give the school your oldest child attends?

Public School Parents	A	B	C	D	FAIL	Don't Know
	%	%	%	%	%	%
TOTAL	**23**	**48**	**19**	**5**	**2**	**3**
Education						
College	22	54	15	3	1	5
High school	23	44	22	7	3	1
Occupation						
White collar	26	56	9	4	2	3
Blue collar	23	41	25	7	2	2
Oldest Child Attends						
High school	24	45	22	7	1	1
Elementary school	23	52	18	4	3	*
Oldest Child's Class Standings						
Above average	33	51	13	2	1	*
Average or below	13	47	28	9	3	*

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Rating of Teachers in the Local Public Schools

Almost half of all respondents (49%) gave teachers in the local public schools a grade of A or B in 1985. This percentage is statistically equal to the 50% of respondents who gave teachers in the local schools a grade of A or B in 1984 – and up considerably from 1981, when only 39% of respondents did so.

Parents of children in the public schools were more likely to award grades of A or B to teachers (58%) than were respondents with no children in school (47%).

The question and the findings:

Now, what grade would you give the teachers in the public schools in this community?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
A	12	13	12	8
B	37	34	46	33
C	26	24	31	29
D	7	7	5	15
FAIL	3	3	4	4
Don't know	15	19	2	11

Rating of Principals and Administrators in the Local Public Schools

The grades given school principals and other administrators are similar to those given teachers. Almost half (48%) of all respondents gave principals and other administrators grades of A or B in 1985. Once again, respondents with children in the public schools were more likely to award above-average grades to principals and other administrators (56%) than were respondents with no children in school (45%).

The question and the findings:

Now, what grade would you give the principals and administrators in the public schools in this community?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
A	14	14	16	6
B	34	31	40	32
C	25	23	27	31
D	9	9	10	19
FAIL	4	4	4	5
Don't know	14	19	3	7

Rating of Teachers and Principals in the Schools Their Children Attend

When parents were referring specifically to the schools their own children attended, fully 68% gave the teachers a grade of A or B in 1985, and 69% said that the performance of principals and administrators deserved a grade of A or B.

Among parents whose children were above average in academic attainment, eight in 10 gave their children's teachers a grade of A or B, and 77% gave administrative personnel a grade of A or B.

The questions and the findings:

Using the A, B, C, D, FAIL scale again, what grade would you give the teachers in the school your oldest child attends?

Public School Parents	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
TOTAL	**22**	**46**	**21**	**5**	**2**	**4**
Education						
College	24	48	17	4	1	6
High school	18	46	25	5	3	3
Occupation						
White collar	21	53	17	2	1	6
Blue collar	24	40	25	6	3	2
Oldest Child Attends						
High school	16	46	26	7	3	2
Elementary school	25	48	20	3	2	2
Oldest Child's Class Standing						
Above average	29	51	16	3	*	1
Average or below	14	42	29	7	5	3

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Using the A, B, C, D, FAIL scale again, what grade would you give the principals and administrators in the school your oldest child attends?

Public School Parents	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
TOTAL	**23**	**46**	**19**	**4**	**4**	**4**
Education						
College	24	41	22	4	2	7
High school	22	49	15	4	7	3
Occupation						
White collar	27	45	14	4	3	7
Blue collar	23	43	20	5	6	3
Oldest Child Attends						
High school	20	48	18	5	7	2
Elementary school	25	46	20	4	3	2
Oldest Child's Class Standing						
Above average	32	45	16	4	2	1
Average or below	13	49	22	5	8	3

Sex Education

The 1985 findings showed an increase in support for sex education in both the elementary school and the high school since the last survey on the subject, conducted in 1981. In 1981, 70% supported including sex education in the high school curriculum, and 45% favored sex education for elementary school students. In 1985, the comparable figures were 75% for high school and 52% for elementary school.

The question and the findings:

Do you feel the public high schools should or should not include sex education in their instructional program?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Should	75	72	81	80
Should not	19	21	16	15
Don't know	6	7	3	5

Do you feel the public elementary schools should or should not include sex education in grades 4 through 8?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Should	52	50	54	64
Should not	43	43	43	31
Don't know	5	7	3	5

	Sex Education			
	In High School		In Elementary School	
	1985 %	1981 %	1985 %	1981 %
Should include	75	70	52	45
Should not include	19	22	43	48
Don't know	6	8	5	7

Topics to Be Covered in Sex Education

When those respondents who support the idea of sex education were asked to indicate which topics should be covered, large differences emerged between the topics deemed acceptable for high school and those deemed acceptable for the elementary classroom. The sole exception was the biology of reproduction, which more than eight Americans in 10 felt should be covered at both levels.

More than 80% of the respondents favored covering the topics of venereal disease and birth control at the high school level, but slightly less than 50% felt that these topics should be included in the elementary sex education curriculum. About six Americans in 10 favored discussing premarital sex, the nature of sexual intercourse, and abortion at the high school level. At the elementary level, inclusion of those topics was favored by only 34%, 45%, and 28% respectively.

Parents of children enrolled in the public schools do not differ significantly from respondents who do not have children in school when it comes to the specific topics that they think should be covered in sex education courses. Parents who send their children to nonpublic schools tend to be somewhat more liberal on this score than either of the other two groups of respondents.

The question and the findings:

Which of the following topics, if any, listed on this card should be included in high school? In elementary school?

Should Be Included In High School	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Birth control	85	85	83	88
Venereal disease	84	85	81	89
Biology of reproduction	82	82	79	90
Premarital sex	62	63	59	69
Nature of sexual intercourse	61	62	57	73
Abortion	60	61	57	68
Homosexuality	48	48	45	62

Should Be Included In Elementary School	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Biology of reproduction	89	87	91	99
Venereal disease	49	50	45	60
Birth control	48	49	44	51
Nature of sexual intercourse	45	48	37	54
Premarital sex	34	35	28	48
Abortion	28	28	26	42
Homosexuality	28	29	22	41

	Topics That Should Be Included			
	In High School		In Elementary School	
	1985	1981	1985	1981
	%	%	%	%
Birth control	85	79	48	45
Venereal disease	84	84	49	52
Biology of reproduction	82	77	89	83
Premarital sex	62	60	34	40
Nature of sexual intercourse	61	53	45	36
Abortion	60	54	28	26
Homosexuality	48	45	28	33

Attitudes Toward Coeducational Sports

In 1985 Americans were remarkably receptive to the idea of coeducational athletic teams in U.S. public high schools. A comparison with 1976 figures showed greater acceptance in virtually every sport.

This increasingly favorable attitude prevailed for such noncontact sports as tennis and track, such "semi-contact" sports as basketball and baseball, and such heavy contact sports as football and wrestling. About eight Americans in 10 did not object to coeducational teams in the noncontact sports of tennis and swimming; seven Americans in 10 did not object to coeducational teams in track. Almost half of all Americans thought that girls should be allowed to play on high school baseball and basketball teams with boys. About one American in six favored allowing girls to play on high school football teams with boys, and about one American in 10 felt that wrestling teams should be coeducational.

For all sports covered by the survey, 18- to 29-year-olds proved more likely than older respondents to favor coeducational teams. Findings from the 1985 Gallup Youth Survey, which samples U.S. 13- to 18-year-olds, also suggested that younger Americans were the group most likely to favor coeducational teams.

The question and the findings:

Do you think high school boys and girls should or should not be allowed to play on the same school teams in the following sports?

Should Be Allowed	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Tennis	85	84	87	89
Swimming	79	78	80	81
Track	68	67	69	76
Baseball	48	47	49	57
Basketball	40	40	39	48
Football	16	16	14	15
Wrestling	11	12	8	10

Further breakdowns:

Should Be Allowed	U.S. Public	13- to 18-Year-Olds*
	%	%
Tennis	85	95
Swimming	79	88
Track	68	86
Baseball	48	49
Basketball	40	43
Football	16	21
Wrestling	11	16

*Findings from the Gallup Youth Survey, April 1985.

Importance of Extracurricular Activities

In 1985 about eight Americans in 10 felt that extracurricular activities are important to a young person's education — roughly the same percentage as in the two previous surveys (1984 and 1978) that dealt with this topic. Of the 80% in 1985 who said that extracurricular activities are important, 39% deemed them "very" important, and 41% deemed them "fairly" important.

The question and the findings:

I'd like your opinion about extracurricular activities such as the school band, dramatics, sports, and the school newspaper. How important are these to a young person's education — very important, fairly important, not too important, or not at all important?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Very important	39	37	44	57
Fairly important	41	43	37	31
Not too important	14	14	16	10
Not at all important	3	3	2	2
No opinion	3	3	1	*

*Less than one-half of 1%.

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985	1984	1978
	%	%	%
Very important	39	31	45
Fairly important	41	46	40
Not too important	14	18	9
Not at all important	3	4	4
No opinion	3	1	2

Standards for Participation in Extracurricular Activities

In 1985 Americans were virtually unanimous in supporting a requirement that students who participate in extracurricular activities maintain passing grades and acceptable school attendance records. Nine respondents in 10 in every population subgroup approved of this idea.

The question and the findings:

Do you feel that high school students who participate in sports and extracurricular activities should or should not be required to maintain a minimum grade-point average and school attendance record?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Should be required	91	90	91	97
Should not be required	6	6	7	1
Don't know	3	4	2	2

Subjects the Public Would Require

As was the case in previous surveys, mathematics and English again headed the list of subjects that the public would require of all high school students in 1985. For students who plan to attend college, 91% of the respondents mentioned mathematics as a requirement, and 88% mentioned English. For *non*-college-bound students, 85% of the public would require mathematics, and 81% would require English.

For the college-bound, a large majority of respondents would also require history/U.S. government (76%), science (76%), and computer training (71%). A smaller number, but still a majority, would require business (59%), career education (57%), and foreign language (53%) as well.

The public was less inclined to require history/U.S. government (61%), science (51%), and computer training (57%) of students who do not plan to attend college – though a majority still favored doing so. The public tended as often to favor business and career education coursework for the non-college-bound as for those who plan to attend college.

The clear third-place choice of subjects, behind mathematics and English, for the non-college-bound was vocational training, favored by 75%. Only 17% thought that foreign language should be a requirement for students who do not plan to attend college, however.

The questions and the findings:

Would you look over this card, which lists high school subjects. If you were the one to decide, what subjects would you require every high school student *who plans to go on to college* to take?

What about those public high school students who do *not plan to go to college* when they graduate? Which courses would you require them to take?

	Should Be Required	
	For Those Planning to Go to College	For Those Not Planning to Go to College
	%	%
Mathematics	91	85
English	88	81
History/U.S. government	76	61
Science	76	51
Computer training	71	57
Business	59	60
Career education	57	57
Foreign language	53	17
Health education	48	43
Physical education	40	40
Vocational training	27	75
Music	24	15
Art	23	15

	Should Be Required							
	For Those Planning to Go to College				For Those Not Planning to Go to College			
	1985	1984	1983	1981	1985	1984	1983	1981
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Mathematics	91	96	92	94	85	92	87	91
English	88	94	88	91	81	90	83	89
History/U.S. government	76	84	78	83	61	71	63	71
Science	76	84	76	76	51	61	53	58
Computer training	71	*	*	*	57	*	*	*
Business	59	68	55	60	60	76	65	75
Career education	57	*	*	*	57	*	*	*
Foreign language	53	57	50	54	17	19	19	21
Health education	48	52	43	47	43	50	42	46
Physical education	40	43	41	44	40	44	40	43
Vocational training	27	37	32	34	75	83	74	64
Music	24	22	18	26	15	18	16	20
Art	23	24	19	28	15	18	16	20

*These subjects were not included in earlier surveys.

Support for Special Programs

Poll findings for 1985 showed that public attitudes toward spending public school funds for special programs had changed substantially since 1982. In 1982 the public opposed by a narrow margin (48% to 42%) spending additional funds for special programs for children with learning problems. In that same year the public strongly opposed (64% to 19%) spending additional funds on programs for gifted and talented students.

Just three years later, however, the public favored additional spending for those with learning problems by a margin of 51% to 40%. Although the public remained opposed to increased spending for the gifted and talented, support for increased spending in this area had risen from 19% to 30%.

The questions and the findings:

How do you feel about the spending of public school funds for special instruction and homework programs for students with learning problems? Do you feel that more public school funds should be spent on students with learning problems than on average students — or the same amount?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
More spent	51	52	50	49
Same amount spent	40	38	44	43
Less spent	2	2	2	1
Don't know	7	8	4	7

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985	1982
	%	%
More spent	51	42
Same amount spent	40	48
Less spent	2	4
Don't know	7	6

How do you feel about the spending of public school funds for special instruction and homework programs for gifted and talented students? Do you feel that more school funds should be spent on gifted and talented students than on average students — or the same amount?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
More spent	30	30	32	36
Same amount spent	58	58	58	56
Less spent	5	5	5	3
Don't know	7	7	5	5

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985	1982
	%	%
More spent	30	19
Same amount spent	58	64
Less spent	5	11
Don't know	7	6

Financing the Public Schools

In 1985 the U.S. public opposed raising taxes for local public schools by a margin of roughly 5 to 4. In previous surveys, the public had always opposed raising taxes for the local schools, though in 1969 the split was almost even (45% in favor, 49% opposed). The opposition to increased taxes reached its highest level in 1981, at the height of the property tax revolt, when the public opposed raising taxes to support the public schools by a margin of 2 to 1.

The question and the findings:

Suppose the local public schools said they needed much more money. As you feel at this time, would you vote to raise taxes for this purpose, or would you vote against raising taxes for this purpose?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
For raise in taxes	38	35	46	37
Against raise in taxes	52	53	47	52
No opinion	10	12	7	11

Caring for Preschool and Latchkey Children

The 1985 poll asked whether or not people favored two proposals that would involve the public schools in an almost custodial role. The first proposal would make tax-supported child-care centers available for preschool children. The second would extend the school day for latchkey children — children whose parents get home after the conclusion of the school day.

The public was about evenly divided on both proposals. Forty-three percent favored the provision of tax-supported child care for preschoolers; 45% were opposed. Virtually the same split was recorded when this proposal was tested in 1981 and in 1976.

Forty-three percent of the public favored and 46% opposed the proposal to provide extended school hours for latchkey children. Paradoxically, parents of public school children were only slightly more in favor of both proposals than were people with no children in the public schools.

The questions and the findings:

A proposal has been made to make child-care centers available for all preschool children as part of the public school system. This program would be supported by taxes. Would you favor or oppose such a program in your school district?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	43	42	47	44
Oppose	45	44	47	50
Don't know	12	14	6	6

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985	1981	1976
	%	%	%
Favor	43	46	46
Oppose	45	47	49
Don't know	12	7	5

A proposal has been made to extend the school day for so-called latchkey children, that is, children whose parents are still at work when the children get home from school. This program would be supported by taxes. Would you favor or oppose such a program in your school district?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	43	42	46	53
Oppose	46	45	48	41
Don't know	11	13	6	6

Rights and Privileges of Public School Students

By a margin of more than 3 to 1 (40% to 12%), the U.S. public felt in 1985 that local public school students had too many rights and privileges rather than not enough. One-fourth of the public felt that students had about the right amount of privileges.

This relationship had remained fairly stable since 1975, when the question was last asked. However, the 1985 findings differed substantially from those of the 1972 survey. At that time, almost as large a percentage of the public felt that students did not have enough rights as felt that they had too many.

The question and the findings:

Generally speaking, do the local public school students in this community have too many rights and privileges, or not enough?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Too many	40	38	42	55
Not enough	12	12	13	5
Just about right	25	23	35	22
No opinion	23	27	10	18

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985	1975	1972
	%	%	%
Too many	40	45	41
Not enough	12	10	11
Just about right	25	27	33
No opinion	23	18	15

Rights of Public School Authorities to Examine Student Property

In 1985, by a 4 to 1 margin (78% to 18%), the public supported the right of school authorities to open students' lockers or to examine their personal property for contraband – drugs, liquor, or stolen property. Controversy had recently arisen in a number of communities over this issue. Parents were even more in favor of granting this authority to the schools than were nonparents.

The question and the findings:

Do you feel that teachers or school authorities should or should not be allowed to open students' lockers or examine personal property if they suspect drugs, liquor, or stolen goods are hidden there?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Should	78	76	84	89
Should not	18	19	15	10
Don't know	4	5	1	1

Attitudes Toward Homework

In 1983 the National Commission on Excellence in Education recommended in *A Nation at Risk* that public school students be assigned far more homework than they were currently given. The 1985 survey showed the public roughly divided on that recommendation in the case of elementary students, with 40% in favor and 38% opposed. The public supported increased homework for high school students by a ratio of almost 5 to 3, however, with 47% in favor and 31% opposed.

Parents of children enrolled in the public schools were about as likely as those who had no children in school to favor more homework. However, parents whose children received average or below-average grades were somewhat more likely to favor increased homework – both in elementary school and in high school – than were parents whose children's academic performance was above average.

Nonwhites were more likely than whites – by margins of 67% to 45% at the high school level and 66% to 36% at the elementary school level – to favor increased homework. Residents of inner cities and people living in the Western U.S. were also more likely than other population subgroups to support increased homework.

The questions and the findings:

Do you think elementary school children in the public schools here should be assigned more homework or not?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Should be	40	37	45	53
Should not be	38	35	48	22
Don't know	22	28	7	25

Do you think high school students in the public schools here should be assigned more homework or not?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Should be	47	46	49	60
Should not be	31	29	37	19
Don't know	22	25	14	21

Time Spent on Homework and on Televiewing

According to 1985 poll findings, about six public school parents in 10 (61%) required that their children devote a minimum amount of time to homework on school nights. These parents required an average of one hour and 25 minutes of homework nightly.

By contrast, only about five public school parents in 10 (49%) limited the amount of time their children could spend watching television on school nights. These parents allowed their children to spend an average of one hour and 50 minutes nightly on this activity.

Interestingly, parents' socioeconomic backgrounds and their children's levels of academic achievement bore little relationship to the requirements that parents set with regard

to children's homework and televiewing. Parents who had attended college, who held white-collar jobs, or whose children were above-average students were no more likely than other subgroups to require a minimum amount of homework or to establish a maximum amount of time for children's televiewing.

The questions and the findings.

Do you require that your oldest child spend a minimum amount of time on homework during the school week?

Do you place a definite limit on the amount of time your child spends viewing television during the school week?

Public School Parents	Minimum Time for Homework	Maximum Time for Television
	%	%
Yes	61	49
No	36	46
Undesignated	3	5

Importance of a College Education

Findings of the 1985 survey showed increases in the percentage of the U.S. public that viewed a college education as important. Nine Americans in 10 (91%) said that they felt that a college education is very important or fairly important. Nonparents were as likely to feel that a college education is important as were parents of public school children.

The question and the findings:

How important is a college education today — very important, fairly important, or not too important?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Very important	64	64	66	64
Fairly important	27	27	24	29
Not too important	7	7	9	7
Don't know	2	2	1	*

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985	1983	1978
	%	%	%
Very important	64	58	36
Fairly important	27	31	46
Not too important	7	8	16
Don't know	2	3	2

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Attitudes Toward Competency Testing of Teachers

Almost universally in 1985, the American public supported the use of basic competency tests to measure teachers' knowledge and intellectual ability. In the population as a whole and in every subgroup surveyed, about nine respondents in 10 favored such testing.

The question and the findings:

Before they are hired by a school district, do you feel all teachers should or should not be required to pass a basic competency test to measure such things as their general knowledge and ability to think?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Should	89	88	89	92
Should not	6	6	7	5
Don't know	5	6	4	3

Attitudes Toward Merit Pay Programs

In 1985 six Americans in 10 favored merit pay for teachers – about the same proportion as in 1984, when 65% supported the idea. Surprisingly, respondents with no children in school favored merit pay for teachers by almost as large a percentage as did public school parents.

According to the 1984 Gallup Poll of Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, teachers' views on merit pay are almost exactly the reverse of the public's views (see the October 1984 *Kappan*, p. 103). While the public supported merit pay for teachers by a ratio of more than 2 to 1, teachers opposed the idea by a ratio of exactly 2 to 1 (64% to 32%).

The question and the findings:

How do you, yourself, feel about the idea of merit pay for teachers? In general, do you favor or oppose it?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	60	59	62	69
Oppose	24	23	25	21
No opinion	16	18	13	10

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985	1984
	%	%
Favor	60	65
Oppose	24	22
No opinion	16	13

Teachers' Salaries in This Community

Again in 1985, the U.S. public tended to feel that public school teachers are underpaid. About four Americans in 10 (43%) felt that teachers' salaries were about right, but only 6% said that they were too high, whereas 33% said they were too low.

This pattern of responses is virtually the same as those found in prior surveys on the subject. Many more Americans have generally believed that teachers are underpaid than that they are overpaid. Interestingly, this view is held by those who do not have children enrolled in the public schools, as well as by those who do.

Not surprisingly, teachers' attitudes regarding teacher salaries were more one-sided than the public's attitudes on that topic. In the 1984 Gallup Poll of Teachers' Attitudes Toward

the Public Schools, only 9% of the teachers surveyed felt that their pay was about right, while 90% deemed it too low and less than 1% said that it was too high (see the October 1984 *Kappan*, p. 102).

The question and the findings:

Do you think salaries in this community for teachers are too high, too low, or just about right?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Too high	6	5	7	5
Too low	33	30	38	42
Just about right	43	44	42	37
No opinion	18	21	13	16

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985	1984	1983	1981	1969
	%	%	%	%	%
Too high	6	7	8	10	2
Too low	33	37	35	29	33
Just about right	43	41	31	41	43
No opinion	18	15	26	20	22

Biggest Problems Facing the Public Schools in 1985

In 1985 the U.S. public continued to regard discipline as the most important problem facing the public schools. This was true in every poll but one since this series began in 1969.

One-quarter of all citizens polled named "discipline" the biggest problem facing the public schools, roughly the same percentage as in previous polls. The next most frequently mentioned problem was "use of drugs," a discipline-related area mentioned by 18% of the public in this year's poll. The most frequently cited problem that pertains to the quality of schooling was "poor curriculum/poor standards," mentioned by 11% of the public. The only other responses mentioned by more than 5% of the public were "difficulty in getting good teachers" and "lack of proper financial support," mentioned by 10% and 9% of the public respectively.

The question and the findings:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the *public* schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Lack of discipline	25	23	25	43
Use of drugs	18	18	20	11
Poor curriculum/poor standards	11	11	11	10
Difficulty in getting good teachers	10	10	12	12
Lack of proper financial support	9	9	9	8
Pupils' lack of interest/truancy	5	6	4	3
Large schools/overcrowding	5	4	7	7
Integration/busing	4	5	2	*
Teachers' lack of interest	4	3	6	8
Drinking/alcoholism	3	3	2	5
Parents' lack of interest	3	3	3	6
Lack of respect for teachers/other students	3	3	2	1
Mismanagement of funds/programs	2	2	4	5
Low teacher pay	2	1	2	4
Moral standards	2	2	1	2
Lack of needed teachers	2	1	3	1
Communication problems	2	1	3	1
Crime/vandalism	2	1	2	*
Lack of proper facilities	1	1	1	1
Problems with administration	1	*	1	1
School board policies	1	1	1	*
Government interference	1	1	*	1
Teacher strikes	1	1	*	1
Parental involvement in school activities	1	1	1	1
Too many schools/declining enrollment	1	1	1	1
Transportation	1	1	1	*
Non-English-speaking students	1	1	1	1
Fighting	1	1	2	*
There are no problems	2	1	4	*
Miscellaneous	4	3	5	10
Don't know	14	19	4	4

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)
*Less than one-half of 1%.

Preferred Solutions to Discipline Problems

When Americans are asked to choose the solutions they prefer from a list of suggested ways to solve discipline problems, they tend to choose the least harsh measures.

In 1985 the public responded most favorably to those solutions that involve discussion and instruction, for both teachers and parents. The most frequently chosen solutions were "classes for teachers on how to deal with problem children," chosen by 64% of the public; "discussion groups with parents of problem children," chosen by 62% of the public; and "required classes for parents of problem children," chosen by 50% of the public.

The next most popular solutions would deal with problem students *within* the school system, by suspending students who exhibit extreme behavior problems (46%), by forming special classes (45%), or by creating work-study programs in which students attend school half-time and work half-time (44%).

Forty-two percent of the public would favor beefing up the court system, the probation system, and work programs for

delinquent youths. Only 21% of the public would favor establishing alternative schools for students with discipline problems.

The question and the findings:

Lack of discipline is often cited as a problem confronting the public schools. Please look over this list and tell me which of these possible solutions you think would be most helpful in improving school discipline.

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Classes for teachers on how to deal with problem children	64	62	67	73
Discussion groups with parents of problem children	62	61	66	71
Required classes for parents of problem children	50	50	51	59
Suspension of students with extreme behavior problems	46	44	50	50
Formation of special classes for students who have behavior problems	45	45	43	43
Creation of a system of work-study programs, with problem children doing useful work half-time and attending school half-time	44	44	43	53
Classes for administrators to help them create more orderly behavior	43	43	43	48
Tougher courts, probation systems, and work programs for delinquents	42	41	44	52
Creation of a curriculum more relevant to the interests and concerns of students	32	31	34	31
Alternative schools	21	21	20	25

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

Chapter 19
The Eighteenth Annual Poll, 1986

Events of the Year in Education

The nation's 50 state governors took a highly visible position for the defense and improvement of public education.

Using the National Governors' Association as a base, they had set up task forces to study the relation of schools to jobs, economic growth, and competitiveness; how education can help reduce welfare costs; what the schools can do to prevent alcohol and drug abuse and teen pregnancies; and how to reduce the dropout rate. Their conclusions, published under the title *Time for Results*, became a latter-day entry into the stream of "excellence reports."

The governors' interest in education was not utopian; it had a practical rationale. They expressed their views not only in *Time for Results* but in numerous statements during the year, the highlights of which were:

- We must increase the industrial productivity of each state and of the nation. We must gain competitive advantage for American industry in world markets.
- Better schools mean better jobs. Unless the people in each state face this fact, Americans won't keep their high standards of living. To meet stiff competition from workers in the rest of the world, we must educate ourselves and our children as we never have before.
- The United States will not succeed in international markets until the education system is put right. The idea that you can be a great power with a second-rate school system is ludicrous.

The governors applauded the efforts of state legislatures to reform the schools and pledged increased support in the years ahead. They committed themselves to a long-range effort – in fact, until 1991 (the subtitle of *Time for Results* was "The Governors' 1991 Report on Education"). They promised to seek larger sums of money from their legislatures for dropout prevention, for reduction of teen pregnancies, and for the control of drug and alcohol abuse among young people. And they declared among the 1991 goals to be the following:

- Kindergartens for all five-year-olds, day-care centers for as many preschool children as possible, and quality early childhood programs.
- A challenging curriculum for all students and extra help in the basic skills for students with deficiencies.
- Alternative schools or offerings for all high school students on the verge of dropping out of school and for those who already have dropped out, so that they will return to complete their high school education.

In one of many statements attracting national attention, the governors said: "We are ready for some old-fashioned horse-trading. We'll regulate less if schools produce better results. But we are ready to take over any school system that allows its educational offerings and services to deteriorate."

The school health clinic, designed to reduce pregnancy among students and help young parents with their problems, moved into the spotlight as one of the most controversial educational ventures of the year.

Baffled by increased numbers of sexually active and pregnant students, school boards and administrators, especially in urban centers, turned to the school-based health clinic as one possible source of help for the problem. Dallas (1968) and St. Paul (1973) provided the earliest models. By 1986 the number had risen to more than 70; and despite continued attacks by conservative and some religious groups, an estimated 80 more clinics were in the planning stages.

Most school-based clinics were launched with the major goal of reducing teenage pregnancy; however, some addressed additional adolescent problems: weight control, nutrition, dental screening, social and emotional issues, career counseling, and family planning.

Some clinics were established to function totally under board of education control, others to operate in cooperation with hospitals, medical schools, and community agencies. No matter how the clinics were organized, controversy centered on the dispensing of birth-control devices and information – and continues to do so. Roman Catholic bishops in New York City, Boston, Los Angeles, and other large cities have attacked the clinic birth-control services as "outrageous" and "a betrayal of parental rights."

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had another reason for complaint. The organization charged that school clinics were located mostly in schools with high minority enrollments and were using black and Hispanic students "for experiments in social engineering." School officials generally denied such charges as "irresponsible" and said they were administering the clinics "for the benefit of the students, their families, and the community."

The federal Centers for Disease Control revealed that some 225 students were infected by AIDS, the dreaded acquired immune deficiency syndrome, and that the number would grow to 3,000 by 1991.

Stirred to action, national, state, and local educators intensified efforts to 1) help schools deal with AIDS victims and 2) broaden educational offerings to prevent spread of the disease.

From the U.S. Department of Education came news that Secretary Bennet authorized preparation of a guide for par-

ents and teachers, with the working title *AIDS and the Education of Our Children*. Inside information indicated that the guide would emphasize that "appropriate moral and social conduct" is the only sure way to prevent the spread of the disease. A department spokesman said: "We believe that saying no to premarital sex, marital infidelity, and intravenous drug use offers the best protection against AIDS."

State education agencies reported that they planned to go beyond moral warnings and recommended an AIDS curriculum that would include explicit information, including use of condoms. State officials were keeping an eye on Oklahoma, which had adopted a law requiring AIDS education in public junior and senior high schools. Other state education agency officials said AIDS education must begin in the kindergarten and early grades. Massachusetts, Maryland, Arizona, South Dakota, Florida, and Texas were among states with advanced plans for AIDS education programs.

An estimated 1,000 local school districts also had some form of AIDS education. The challenge before superintendents and principals was to provide inservice training for teachers on how and what to teach about AIDS and on how to respond to parents about the alarming subject.

The big question of the year was: What do children need to know about AIDS and at what age should AIDS education begin? The question was largely unanswered during the year, but a few guidelines began to emerge:

Lessons presented by the teacher should give young people accurate information. They should not frighten students or advocate any specific value system or life style (as the U.S. education secretary would have it). Junior and senior high school students should be taught the epidemiology of contagious diseases, modes of the AIDS virus transmission, and precautionary measures. AIDS should be presented in a framework of science, health, or sex education.

Most Important Problems Facing Local Public Schools in 1986

In 1986, for the first time in the survey's history, the U.S. public identified drug use by students as the most important problem facing the public schools. More than half of the respondents mentioned either drugs (28%) or discipline (24%), which was rated most important in 16 of the 17 previous polls. (In 1971 "lack of proper financial support" was considered the most important problem.) The best-educated respondents – those with college degrees – continued to perceive discipline rather than drugs as the schools' most important problem. The margin was substantial, 30% to 18%.

The question and the findings:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the public schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Use of drugs	28	28	27	22
Lack of discipline	24	24	23	26
Lack of proper financial support	11	9	15	14
Poor curriculum/poor standards	8	7	10	11
Difficulty in getting good teachers	6	6	6	5
Moral standards/dress code	5	5	5	11
Drinking/alcoholism	5	4	5	8
Large schools/ overcrowding	5	4	6	5
Teachers' lack of interest	4	4	6	7
Lack of respect for teachers/other students	4	4	4	3
Parents' lack of interest	4	3	5	4
Low teacher pay	3	2	4	3
Integration/busing	3	4	3	3
Crime/vandalism	3	3	3	1
Pupils' lack of interest/truancy	3	3	2	1
Problems with administration	2	2	3	5
Fighting	2	2	2	*
Mismanagement of funds/programs	1	1	1	3
Communication problems	1	1	1	3
Lack of needed teachers	1	1	1	2
Lack of proper facilities	1	1	1	2
Transportation	1	1	2	1
Teacher strikes	1	1	1	1
Too many schools/declining enrollment	1	1	1	*
Parents' involvement in school activities	1	1	1	*
There are no problems	2	2	4	3
Miscellaneous	6	6	4	6
Don't know	11	13	4	5

*Less than one-half of 1%.
(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

Parents Distinguish Between 'Local Schools' And Schools Their Children Attend

As reported in previous studies, parents tend to be more positive about their children's schools than about the local schools as a group. Thus parents may regard drugs and discipline as problems in the local public schools but not in the school their oldest child attends. In 1986, the difference favoring a child's school was 16% versus 27% for drugs and 15% versus 23% for discipline.

Drugs were perceived as a more serious problem by parents of high school children than by parents of elementary school children. Similarly, parents whose oldest children

were either average or below average academically were somewhat more likely than other parents to see drugs as the most important problem facing the public schools.

The question and the findings:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the school your oldest child attends must deal?

	School Own Child Attends %	Local Schools %
Use of drugs	16	27
Lack of discipline	15	23
Lack of proper financial support	9	15
Large schools/overcrowding	9	6
Poor curriculum/poor standards	7	10
Parents' lack of interest	4	5
Teachers' lack of interest	4	6
Moral standards/dress code	4	5
Difficulty in getting good teachers	3	6
Pupils' lack of interest/truancy	3	2
Drinking/alcoholism	3	5
Lack of needed teachers	3	1
Lack of respect for teachers/other students	3	4
Fighting	3	2
Parent's involvement in school activities	3	1
There are no problems	8	4
Miscellaneous	24	24
Don't know	12	4

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

Support for Anti-Drug Measurers in Local Schools

Survey respondents were asked to rate five measures for dealing with the drug problem in their local public schools. Nine in 10 supported mandatory instruction in the dangers of drug abuse, roughly the same percentage who felt that education about the dangers of drug abuse should be a required course in the school curriculum (as reported in earlier studies). Eight in 10 favored the expulsion of students caught using drugs. Seven in 10 supported using school funds to treat drug users, and the same proportion would permit school officials to search lockers when they suspected that drugs might be concealed in them. By a small majority (5 to 4), respondents even favored urinalysis to detect drug use.

Support for each measure was virtually the same for parents and nonparents of schoolchildren. However, young people (under 30), while they were more likely to favor use of school funds to treat drug users than were their elders, were substantially less likely to support two of the more stringent measures: locker searches and urinalysis. Nonwhites were somewhat more likely to favor locker searches and substantially more likely to favor urinalysis than were whites, but they were less likely to favor expulsion of drug users from school.

College-educated and upper-income respondents were somewhat more likely to favor use of school funds for treating drug users than were their less-educated and less financially well-off counterparts.

The question and the findings:

This card lists various ways to deal with the problem of drugs in the public schools. As I read off each one of these plans, would you tell me whether you would favor or oppose its use in the public schools in your community?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Requiring instruction for all students in the dangers of drug abuse.				
Favor	90	90	91	92
Oppose	6	6	6	5
Don't know	4	4	3	3
Permitting expulsion of students who are caught using drugs in school buildings or on school grounds.				
Favor	78	77	81	82
Oppose	16	16	14	17
Don't know	6	7	5	1
Use of school funds to provide counseling and treatment for students who use drugs.				
Favor	69	68	70	83
Oppose	25	26	24	16
Don't know	6	6	6	1
Permitting teachers or school authorities to search lockers or personal property if they suspect drugs, without obtaining a court-issued search warrant.				
Favor	67	67	67	77
Oppose	28	28	30	22
Don't know	5	5	3	1
Testing students for drug use by urinalysis.				
Favor	49	49	49	49
Oppose	44	44	43	46
Don't know	7	7	8	5

Differences in Problem Perception Among Population Groups

	Use of Drugs %	Lack of Discipline %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**28**	**24**
Sex		
Men	27	24
Women	29	23
Race		
White	27	24
Nonwhite	32	21
Age		
18 to 29 years	27	12
30 to 49 years	26	29
50 years and over	31	29

	Differences in Problem Perception Among Population Groups	
	Use of Drugs %	Lack of Discipline %
Community size		
1 million and over	26	23
500,000 — 999,999	34	24
50,000 — 499,999	29	23
2,500 — 49,999	31	23
Under 2,500	26	25
Central City	27	24
Education		
College	23	24
Graduate	18	30
Incomplete	26	20
High school	31	24
Graduate	28	25
Incomplete	39	22
Grade school	34	19
Income		
$40,000 and over	30	27
$30,000 — $39,999	19	29
$20,000 — $29,999	25	29
$10,000 — $19,999	31	22
Under $10,000	33	19
Region		
East	29	29
Midwest	27	22
South	28	24
West	27	20

Attitudes About AIDS

In 1986, two-thirds of the public would permit their children to attend school with a student who had AIDS. Perhaps surprisingly, the 1986 Gallup survey had not only found an extraordinarily high level of public awareness of the disease (98%) but a very small proportion (6%) of the public who mistakenly believed that a person can contract AIDS merely by being in a public place with someone who has the disease.

The findings for this question only were based on telephone interviews with 1,004 adults, age 18 and older, conducted in scientifically selected localities across the U.S. during the period of 7 to 10 March 1986.

Only one-sixth (17%) of those who would *not* allow their children to attend classes with an AIDS victim believed that the disease can be transmitted by casual social contact, while 59% of this group voiced the opposite opinion and 24% were undecided.

Although substantial majorities in all key population groups believed correctly that AIDS cannot be contracted by casual contact, this feeling was somewhat less prevalent – and uncertainty was more prevalent – among older, less-well-educated, and less-affluent people. Similarly, persons from these groups (which are highly interrelated) were less likely than their counterparts to say that they would permit their children to attend classes with a child who has AIDS.

This question was asked first: "Have you heard or read about the disease called AIDS – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome?" Those who answered yes – an overwhelming 98% of the public – were then asked the following questions.

The first question and the findings:

Do you believe a person can get AIDS by being in a crowded place with someone who has it?

	Casual Transmission of AIDS (Based on aware group)		
	Can Be Transmitted %	Cannot Be %	Not Sure %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**6**	**81**	**13**
Sex			
Men	7	79	14
Women	4	83	13
Race			
White	5	82	13
Nonwhite	10	79	11
Age			
18 to 29 years	8	86	6
30 to 49 years	5	86	9
50 years and over	5	73	22
Education			
College graduate	2	91	7
College incomplete	5	87	8
High school graduate	5	82	13
High school incomplete	11	62	27
Region			
East	3	86	11
Midwest	6	81	13
South	6	77	17
West	6	83	11

The second question and the findings:

A 14-year-old Indiana boy who contracted AIDS through a contaminated blood transfusion was banned from attending school classes. After a county medical officer ruled that he posed no health threat to his classmates, he went back to school, but the parents of almost half of the students at his school kept their children home.

If you had children of this age, would you permit them to attend classes with a child who had AIDS, or not?

	Permit Child to Attend School With AIDS Victim? (Based on aware group)		
	Yes %	No %	Not Sure %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**67**	**24**	**9**
Sex			
Men	66	27	7
Women	67	22	11
Race			
White	67	24	9
Nonwhite	64	27	9
Age			
18 to 29 years	64	29	7
30 to 49 years	69	23	8
50 years and over	65	23	12
Education			
College graduate	72	19	9
College incomplete	68	23	9
High school graduate	68	23	9
High school incomplete	57	35	8
Region			
East	64	27	9
Midwest	69	20	11
South	63	27	10
West	72	22	6

Rating the Schools on Success Characteristics

Good schools should have the following characteristics, according to a consensus of educational researchers:

A. The school's environment should be safe and orderly.
B. The school's principal should spend most of his or her time helping teachers improve their teaching.
C. School administrators and teachers should have high expectations of students and demand high achievement.
D. General agreement should exist among administrators, teachers, and parents about school goals.
E. Student progress toward school goals should be regularly measured and reported.

Public school parents were asked in the 1986 poll to judge how accurately each of the above statements described the school their oldest child was attending: very accurately, fairly accurately, not very accurately, or not at all accurately. The findings were encouraging to educators. About eight in 10 parents believed statements A and E applied very accurately or fairly accurately. About seven in 10 believed the same about statements C and D. About half believed statement B applied very accurately or fairly accurately.

Ironically, though many public school parents perceived drugs and discipline as major problems in the schools their children were attending, the vast majority (85%) felt that these schools were either "very" or "fairly" safe and orderly.

The question and the findings:

This card lists some of the characteristics of good schools. As I read off each item by letter, would you tell me how accurately you feel it describes the school your oldest child attends — very accurately, fairly accurately, not very accurately, or not at all accurately?

	Combined Very Accurately/ Fairly Accurately	Very Accurately	Fairly Accurately	Not Very Accurately	Not at All Accurately	Don't Know
	%	%	%	%	%	%
A. Safe, orderly school environment	84	40	44	10	2	4
E. Student progress measured, reported	80	41	39	9	5	6
C. Staff has high expectations, demands achievement	74	33	41	16	3	7
D. Staff, parents agree on school goals	70	31	39	14	6	10
B. Principal helps teachers	54	17	37	18	8	20

Analysis of the "very accurate" responses among various groups in the parent population generally reveals very little difference, but there were some exceptions. Parents whose children are above average academically are somewhat more likely to state that each of these statements very accurately describes their school than do those parents whose children are average or below average. Parents whose oldest child is in elementary school are substantially more likely to say that the school is safe and orderly than are those whose oldest child is in high school.

Grading the Public Schools and Their Teachers

The 1986 survey indicated that the public schools were perceived as favorably as in 1984 and 1985, when they achieved their highest performance grades since 1976. Forty-one percent of Americans rated the public schools locally (in "this community") as either A or B.

Similarly, 28% of the public gave the public schools, *nationally*, either an A or B – the highest grade since this measurement was initiated in 1981.

Teachers received an A or B from almost half of the public (48%), a figure statistically equivalent to the prior year's 49%, which represented the highest record since the measurement was initiated in 1981.

Administrators were graded A or B by about four in 10 members of the public (42%), a somewhat lower figure than the prior year's record 48% but higher than the low point of 36% recorded at the beginning of the Eighties.

For the first time in 1985 and again in 1986, public school parents were asked to grade the schools their oldest child attended, in addition to the local schools. The 1986 findings, like those of 1985, revealed the same phenomenon that arises in analyzing the grades awarded to the schools nationally, as compared to the schools locally – that is, the closer the contact, the more favorable the perception. Thus public school parents graded the public schools in their own community substantially higher than the public schools nationally, and they rated the public schools their own children attended even higher than the local schools. In the 1986 survey, only 28% of parents gave the public schools, nationally, an A or B; nearly twice as many (55%) gave the local schools an A or B; and almost two-thirds (65%) gave the schools their children attended one of the top two grades.

The question and the findings:

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose, the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
A + B	41	36	55	40
A	11	8	18	11
B	30	28	37	29
C	28	27	29	29
D	11	11	11	16
FAIL	5	5	4	11
Don't know	15	21	1	4

National Ratings

The public's rating of the schools nationally climbed steadily since the first measurement in 1981, from 20% A or B, recorded at that time, to the high point of 28% registered in 1986.

The question and the findings:

How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally — A,B,C,D, or FAIL?

NATIONAL TOTALS	1986 %	1985 %	1984 %	1983 %	1982 %	1981 %
A + B	28	27	25	19	22	20
A	3	3	2	2	2	2
B	25	24	23	17	20	18
C	41	43	49	38	44	43
D	10	12	11	16	15	15
FAIL	5	3	4	6	4	6
Don't know	16	15	11	21	15	16

Grading School Oldest Child Attends

Almost two-thirds of parents (65%) gave the school their oldest child attended an A or B. Only 26% gave the school a grade of C and 6% a D or Failing grade. If their child's academic performance was above average, almost three-quarters of parents (73%) graded their school A or B. Even among parents of average or below-average students, nearly six in 10 (59%) gave their children's school one of the two top grades.

The question and the findings:

Using the A,B,C,D, FAIL scale again, what grade would you give the school your oldest child attends?

Public School Parents	A+B %	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
Total	65	28	37	26	4	2	3

Respondents were asked to rate teachers and administrators on the same A-F scale as the schools. These ratings correspond roughly with school ratings. The summary table below provides overall percentages.

How Americans Grade Public School Education A+B

	Public School Parents %	U.S. Public %	No Children In School %
Public Schools			
Nationally	28	28	28
Locally (all schools in community)	55	41	36
That oldest child attends	65	—	—
Where child receives above-average grades	73	—	—
Public School Teachers			
In local schools	60	48	43
In school oldest child attends	65	—	—
Where child receives above-average grades	77	—	—
Public School Principals and Administrators			
In local schools	56	42	38
In school oldest child attends	63	—	—
Where child receives above-average grades	70	—	—

Attitudes Toward Federal, State, Local Influence on Public Education

The 1986 survey revealed that there was substantial support (57% to 17%) for more influence on public schools from local school boards, moderate support (45% to 32%) for more influence on the part of the state governments, and strong opposition to more federal influence on the way the public schools are run. The 2 to 1 opposition to more federal influence (53% to 26%) was virtually the same as that recorded when the question was asked in 1982, after the Reagan Administration took office.

Parents and nonparents had similar attitudes on these matters. Parents, however, were even more likely than nonparents to oppose increased federal influence. At the same time, they were somewhat more likely than nonparents to favor both increased influence by local school boards and by the state government.

Various population groups rather consistently supported increased influence for local school boards, but some differences emerged on the question of increased control by state and federal government. Younger people and nonwhites were more likely than others to favor it. On the other hand, better-educated and higher-income segments of the population were more likely to favor less influence on the part of either the state governments or the federal government than were their less well-educated and less well-off counterparts.

The question on federal influence and the findings:

Thinking about the future, would you like the federal government in Washington to have more influence, or less influence, in determining the educational program of the local public schools?

NATIONAL TOTALS	1986 %	1982 %
More influence	26	28
Less influence	53	54
Same as now	12	10
Don't know	9	8

The question on state influence and the findings:

How about the state government? Would you like the state government to have more influence, or less influence, in determining the educational program of the local public schools?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
More influence	45	46	45	35
Less influence	32	29	38	38
Same as now	16	16	13	20
Don't know	7	9	4	7

The question on local influence and the findings:

How about the local school board? Would you like the local school board to have more influence, or less influence, in determining the educational program of the local public schools?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
More influence	57	56	61	55
Less influence	17	17	15	19
Same as now	17	16	19	19
Don't know	9	11	5	7

Financing the Public Schools

This survey reveals that 33% of Americans felt that the best way to finance the public schools is by means of state taxes. However, almost as many preferred federal taxes or local property taxes (24% in both instances).

It is instructive to relate what the public felt was the best source of funding for education – federal, state, or local taxes – to its views on which of the three divisions of government should have more influence on education policy. While the public in 1986 disapproved of increased influence on the part of the federal government by a substantial margin, it was by no means opposed to accepting federal tax money.

The mild public preference for state taxes supports the revolution in school funding that began in the Seventies. By 1986, state sources generally yielded more money for public schools than did local taxing units, though there were great variations among the states.

Despite the public's professed desire for better schools, resistance to increased local taxes for improving public education persisted; in 1986, only about one-third (37%) of Americans indicated a willingness to pay more taxes should local school authorities say they are needed. This is roughly the same percentage as reported in these surveys since 1970.

Resistance to increased taxes also surfaces when American are asked specifically whether they would favor or oppose increased property taxes or federal income taxes to improve public education. In 1986 only one-third said they would be willing to pay more property taxes, and only one-fourth favored increasing income taxes. In fact, the only support for increases came for taxes on alcohol and cigarettes and an increased percentage of the take from state lotteries, held in 23 states in 1986.

The question on preferred ways of financing schools and the findings:

There is always a lot of discussion about the best way to finance the public schools. Which do you think is the best way to finance the public schools: by means of local property taxes, by state taxes, or by taxes from the federal government in Washington?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Local property taxes	24	22	28	22
State taxes	33	34	32	36
Taxes from federal government	24	23	28	22
Don't know	19	21	12	20

The questions on knowledge of actual sources of public school support and the findings:

Now, where do you think most of the funds to finance the public schools come from: from local property taxes, from state taxes, or from the federal government in Washington? And what do you think is the second largest source?

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents		Nonpublic School Parents	
	Largest source	Second largest source	Largest source	Second largest source	Largest source	Second largest source	Largest source	Second largest source
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Local property taxes	45	19	44	19	44	19	46	23
State taxes	30	42	30	43	31	39	36	34
Taxes from federal government	11	22	10	20	14	26	4	19
Don't know	14	17	16	18	11	16	14	24

The question on voting to raise taxes for school support and the findings:

Suppose the local public schools said they needed much more money. As you feel at this time, would you vote to raise taxes for this purpose, or would you vote against raising taxes for this purpose?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
For raise in taxes	37	34	45	38
Against raise in taxes	52	54	46	51
No opinion	11	12	9	11

Financial Support of the Public Schools

	Favor Raising Taxes %	Opposed to Raising Taxes %	Don't Know %
1986 survey	37	52	11
1985 survey	38	52	10
1984 survey	41	47	12
1983 survey	39	52	9
1981 survey	30	60	10
1972 survey	36	56	8
1971 survey	40	52	8
1970 survey	37	56	7
1969 survey	45	49	6

The question on preferred type of tax for school support and the findings:

Many states have recently passed school improvement legislation that requires additional financial expenditures. If your state needed to raise more money for the public schools, would you vote for or against the following proposals?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Increased alcoholic beverage taxes?				
Favor	79	78	82	79
Oppose	18	18	17	20
Don't know	3	4	1	1
Increasing the percentage of state lottery money that goes to support public schools in those states with a state lottery?				
Favor	78	77	81	69
Oppose	10	9	12	22
Don't know	12	14	7	9
Increased cigarette and tabacco taxes?				
Favor	74	74	74	79
Oppose	22	21	25	20
Don't know	4	5	1	1
Increased local property taxes?				
Favor	33	31	39	31
Oppose	60	61	56	63
Don't know	7	8	5	6
Increased gasoline taxes?				
Favor	28	28	29	29
Oppose	67	67	68	70
Don't know	5	5	3	1
Increased income taxes?				
Favor	27	25	31	26
Oppose	66	67	65	68
Don't know	7	8	4	6

The Goals of Education

Asked what they consider the chief reasons why people want their children to get an education, Americans in 1986 tended to mention job- and finance-related reasons first. For example, about one-third (34%) cited job opportunities, 8% said to get a better-paying job, 4% said to obtain specialized training, and 9% said to achieve financial security.

Relatively few Americans mentioned preparation for life (23%), to acquire knowledge (10%), to become a better citizen (6%), to learn how to get along with others (4%), or to contribute to society (3%).

Furthermore, nonparents responded in virtually the same way as parents with children in the public schools.

The question and the findings:

People have different reasons why they want their children to get an education. What are the chief reasons that come to your mind?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Job opportunities/ better job	34	35	33	18
Preparation for life/ better life	23	22	25	33
Education is a necessity of life	12	12	12	10
More knowledge	10	10	10	11
Financial security/economic stability	9	8	11	13
To get a better-paying job	8	9	5	2
To become better citizens	6	6	6	5
For a successful life	5	4	7	6
To learn how to get along with people	4	4	3	1
For better/easier life than parents	4	2	7	3
Specialized training profession	4	3	4	9
Teaches person to think/learn/understand	3	3	3	8
To contribute to society	3	3	4	4
Personal development/ self-realization	3	3	4	3
To become self-sufficient (independence)	3	3	4	3
To learn basic skills/ fundamental learning skills	3	3	3	1
To develop the ability to deal with adult responsibilities	2	2	3	5
For happy/happier life	2	2	2	5
Creates opportunities/ opens doors	2	2	2	2
To develop an understanding and appreciation for culture	1	2	1	2
Helps keep children out of trouble	1	1	1	3
Social status	1	1	1	2
To develop self-discipline	1	1	1	1
To develop basic individual values	1	*	1	1
To develop critical thinking skills	1	1	*	1
Miscellaneous	2	2	1	3
Don't know	4	5	3	3

*Less than one-half of 1%.
(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

When Should Children Begin School?

To find out what Americans consider the right age for children to start attending publicly supported schools, respondents to the 1986 survey were asked two sets of questions. The first set asked at which class level children should begin school, and since this would depend directly on the age of the child, the second set investigated the public's views on the appropriate starting age.

Specifically, respondents were asked whether tax-supported kindergarten should be made available to all parents who want it for their children. Then they were asked whether kindergarten should be made compulsory. The age questions sought to determine whether the public would favor or oppose starting school at age 4, a year earlier than is traditional, and, if this idea was rejected, what the public felt was the *right* age for children to begin school.

The findings revealed overwhelming support for making kindergarten available as a regular part of the public school system; eight in 10 respondents favored doing so. Almost as large a proportion (seven in 10) favored compulsory kindergarten.

On the other hand, the public opposed, by more than 2 to 1 (64% to 29%), having children start school at age 4. This finding revealed no attitude change since the early Seventies, when the same question was asked.

An important exception to the negative response to starting school at age 4 appeared among nonwhites, however. A majority of nonwhites (55%) favored starting public school children at age 4; only about one-third (35%) opposed the idea.

The first question and the findings:

A proposal has been made to make kindergarten available for all those who wish it as part of the public school system. The program would be supported by taxes. Would you favor or oppose such a program in your school district?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	80	77	86	78
Oppose	13	14	10	12
Don't know	7	9	4	10

The second question and the findings:

Some educators have proposed that kindergarten be made compulsory for all children before entering first grade. Would you favor or oppose such a program in your school district?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	71	68	80	80
Oppose	22	24	16	17
Don't know	7	8	4	3

The third question and the findings:

Some educators have proposed that young children start school a year earlier, at the age of 4. Does this sound like a good idea or not?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, good idea	29	29	27	29
No	64	62	70	67
Don't know	7	9	3	4

	NATIONAL TOTALS		
	1986	1973	1972
	%	%	%
Yes, good idea	29	30	30
No	64	64	64
Don't know	7	6	6

The final question:

At what age do you think children should start school?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
4 years (or under)	29	29	27	29
5 years	41	40	44	42
6 years	18	18	20	23
7 years (or over)	2	1	2	*
No opinion	10	12	7	6

*Less than one-half of 1%.

The findings concerning what the public feels is the class level at which public school children should start school, cross-tabulated with the *age* at which they should begin, showed the following distribution of preferences:

	%
(Compulsory) Kindergarten at 5	34
(Compulsory) Kindergarten at 4	23
(Compulsory) Kindergarten at 6	10
(Compulsory) First grade at 6*	9
(Compulsory) First grade at 5	6
(Compulsory) First grade at 4	4
No opinion	14

*Most common arrangement.

Support for National Testing

Not only have Americans consistently favored mandatory testing for grade promotion and high school graduation, but they overwhelmingly support the concept of national tests to permit comparisons of the performance of students in various communities.

In the 1986 survey almost eight in 10 members of the public favored the concept of national testing, roughly the same level of support found in three previous surveys, conducted over a 15-year period. Interestingly, parents were just as likely to favor national testing of student performance as were nonparents.

Support for national testing approached eight in 10 in virtually every population segment of the national population, with the single exception of those persons in households with annual incomes of less than $10,000, where the percentage in favor of testing fell below seven in 10 (67%).

The question and the findings:

Would you like to see the students in the local schools given national tests so that their educational achievement could be compared with students in other communities?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	77	76	78	82
No	16	15	19	17
Don't know	7	9	3	1

NATIONAL TOTALS

	1986	1983	1971	1970
	%	%	%	%
Yes	77	75	70	75
No	16	17	21	16
No opinion	7	8	9	9

Support for Stricter Grade Promotion/ High School Graduation Requirements

To ascertain how the public felt about toughening requirements for grade promotion and for high school graduation, as had been recommended in national education reports, respondents were asked a series of questions in 1986. Those who supported stricter graduation requirements were asked whether they would do so if it meant that substantially fewer students would graduate. Finally, respondents were asked which of three proposals they preferred for dealing with those students who could not meet graduation requirements.

The survey revealed that Americans strongly favored stricter requirements for both grade promotion and high school graduation, and by virtually identical margins: 72% to 6% and 70% to 5%. These findings correspond closely with the public's support for testing to determine both grade promotion and high school graduation, as revealed in earlier surveys in this series.

The first question and the findings:

In your opinion, should promotion from grade to grade in the public schools be made more strict than it is now or less strict?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
More strict	72	72	70	73
Less strict	6	5	7	6
Same as now	16	15	20	16
Don't know	6	8	3	5

The second question and the findings:

In your opinion, should the requirements for graduation from the public high schools be made more strict than they are now or less strict?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
More strict	70	71	68	75
Less strict	5	5	7	*
Same as now	19	17	23	20
Don't know	6	7	2	5

*Less than one-half of 1%.

The third question and the findings:

Would you favor stricter requirements for high school graduation even if it meant that significantly fewer students would graduate than is now the case?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	68	68	68	77
No	23	22	26	18
Don't know	9	10	6	5

Groups most in favor of stricter standards for graduation were the college-educated, those in the highest-income households (that is, $30,000 or over), and residents of the nation's largest cities (that is, 1 million or more).

Among groups in the parent population, it was the college-educated and those whose children were above average academically who were most supportive of stricter requirements.

The final question in this series and the findings:

This card lists several ways to deal with those students who do not meet the requirements for public school graduation. Which one of these plans would you prefer?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Have the high schools set up a remedial program for helping students who initially failed to meet the requirements for high school graduation to satisfy these requirements. This program would be supported by taxes.	45	44	45	53
Have high schools set up a remedial program for helping those students who initially failed to meet the requirements for high school graduation to satisfy these requirements. Students would be charged tuition to enter this program.	27	27	30	23
Have the high schools award more than one kind of diploma so that if a student cannot meet the requirements for a standard diploma, he or she would still be awarded a lesser diploma.	19	19	19	16
Don't know	9	10	6	8

Two of the proposals above involve remedial programs to help failing students to meet graduation requirements: one supported by taxes and the other paid for by student tuition. The third proposal calls for awarding a different diploma to those who do not meet the requirements of the standard diploma.

Note that almost three-quarters of Americans (72%) opted for one of the two remedial programs. Support for the free tax-supported proposal was preferred by a margin of almost 2 to 1 (45% to 27%) over the tuition proposal. However, only one in five (19%) chose proposal three, which would award a lesser degree to those who cannot meet the requirements for the standard degree.

Attitudes toward the three proposals were virtually the same among parents of public school children and nonparents, as well as among the various groups in the total national population.

Private and Parochial Schools

American attitudes toward the nation's nonpublic schools, – that is, both the parochial and the independent or private schools – were investigated in the 1986 survey in the following areas:

- the public's support of or opposition to the use of government tax funds to help the nation's parochial schools – and correspondingly to assist the private or independent schools;
- public support of or opposition to the adoption of the voucher system in this country;
- parents' interest in sending their children to private or parochial schools, if they had the necessary means; and
- parents' acceptance or rejection of a specific voucher proposal that would provide $600 a year to enroll their children in any private, parochial, or public school.

Survey findings revealed that the public was opposed to providing tax money to parochial schools at about the same level as in 1981 and even more than when the question was first asked in 1971. The public was even more negative about giving tax money to support private or independent schools. Only about one-quarter (27%) felt that the government should provide funds for the nation's private schools.

Analysis of responses to both questions in the 1986 survey shows the following distribution:

	%
Favor tax money for *both* parochial and private schools	24
Favor tax money for parochial schools *only*	16
Favor tax money for private schools *only*	3
Favor tax money for *neither* parochial nor private schools	55
Don't know	2

Americans' support for the general concept of vouchers was roughly divided, pro and con, as was the case on the several occasions that the issue has been investigated in this series. Public school parents were roughly divided (49% to 46%) about the desirability of sending their children to a private or parochial school, assuming they had the means to do so.

Response to the specific $600 voucher proposal was generally negative. Only one-quarter of parents (27%) would use the $600 voucher for a parochial or private school; that is, about half of those said they would like to send their children to a nonpublic school. Although 6% said they would move their children from their current public school to another school, it would be a public institution. More than six in 10 (61%), however, would keep their children in the public school they were currently attending.

Support for Tax Assistance for Parochial Schools

About four in 10 respondents (42%) supported the idea of giving tax money to parochial schools, compared to five in 10 who opposed it. This is about the same division that was reported in the 1981 survey.

The 1986 findings revealed somewhat more opposition than when the question was first asked in 1970. At that time the public *supported* use of tax funds for parochial schools by a slim 48% to 44% margin. In 1986, parents of public school children were even more opposed to the idea of giving tax money to parochial schools than were nonparents.

This opposition was shared by most major population groups; the only exception was people living in the East, the region with a heavy concentration of Catholics. In the East, a majority (55%) favored giving tax money to parochial schools, compared to the 35% who opposed the idea.

The question and the findings:

It has been proposed that some government tax money be used to help parochial (church-related) schools make ends meet. How do you feel about this? Do you favor or oppose giving some government tax money to help parochial schools?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	42	42	40	57
Oppose	50	48	54	41
No opinion	8	10	6	2

	NATIONAL TOTALS		
	1986	1981	1970
	%	%	%
Favor	42	40	48
Oppose	50	51	44
No opinion	8	9	8

Support for Tax Assistance to Private Schools

In 1986, two out of three Americans (65%) were opposed to giving tax money to the nation's private schools, and this proportion held among parents of public school children as well as nonparents. This strong opposition permeated every

segment of the population, including people living in the East, with its relatively high concentration of Catholics.

The question and the findings:

How do you feel about private schools? Do you favor or oppose giving some government tax money to help *private schools*?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	27	26	26	48
Oppose	65	66	67	50
No opinion	8	8	7	2

Support for Vouchers

Prior to 1986, the same question about vouchers had been asked in this survey six times, beginning in 1970. Americans in 1986 supported the voucher idea by a close 46% to 41% margin. This was a slight decline from its high point of approval in 1983, when the plan was favored by 51% of the public, while 38% opposed it.

Surprisingly, parents of public school children were only slightly more likely to favor the voucher system than were nonparents.

Although the public, collectively, approved of the voucher system by a narrow margin, majority support for its adoption emerged in certain population segments. Nonwhites favored adoption of the system by a wide margin (54% to 33%). Similarly, those under 30, Catholics, persons residing in the inner cities, and those dissatisfied with the performance of the public schools (that is, give them a D or Failing grade) supported the adoption of the voucher system by about a 5 to 3 margin.

The question and the findings:

In some nations the government allots a certain amount of money for each child for his education. The parents can send the child to any public, parochial, or private school they choose. This is called the "voucher system." Would you like to see such an idea adopted in this country.

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	46	44	51	64
No	41	41	41	28
No opinion	13	15	8	8

NATIONAL TOTALS

	1986	1985	1983	1981	1971	1970
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	46	45	51	43	38	43
No	41	40	38	41	44	46
No opinion	13	15	11	16	18	11

Further breakdowns:

	Yes	No	Don't Know
	%	%	%
NATIONAL TOTALS	**46**	**41**	**13**
Sex			
Men	46	44	10
Women	46	38	16
Race			
White	45	42	13
Nonwhite	54	33	13
Age			
18 to 29 years	55	30	15
30 to 49 years	48	41	11
50 years and over	37	49	14
Community size			
1 million and over	48	36	16
500,000 — 999,999	50	33	17
50,000 — 499,999	53	39	8
2,500 — 49,999	41	53	6
Under 2,500	39	46	15
Central City	52	34	14
Education			
College	44	46	10
Graduate	43	46	11
Incomplete	44	47	9
High school	49	37	14
Graduate	50	36	14
Incomplete	48	37	15
Grade school	40	36	24
Income			
$40,000 and over	51	42	7
$30,000 - $39,999	43	47	10
$20,000 - $29,999	48	41	11
$10,000 - $19,999	47	37	16
$Under $10,000	45	38	17
Region			
East	55	32	13
Midwest	42	46	12
South	43	40	17
West	46	44	10

How a $600 Voucher Would Be Used

In 1986, if public school parents were given a $600 voucher that could be used to enroll their children in *any* school — public, private, or parochial — about one-quarter of them would have used it for a parochial school (14%) or for a private school (13%). Six percent would have used the voucher for another public school, but the majority, 61%, preferred to keep their children in their present public schools.

These views were shared equally among various parent population groups, with one exception. Women appeared to be about twice as likely as men to use a $600 voucher to send their oldest child to a *parochial* school (19% to 9%).

The question and the findings:

Suppose the federal government gave you a voucher worth $600, which you could use to enroll your oldest child in *any* school — public, private, or church-related. Would you use the voucher to enroll the child in another public school, in a private school, a church-related school, or would you keep the child in the same school.

Public School Parents	Other Public School %	Private School %	Church-Related School %	Keep Child In Same School %	Don't Know %
TOTAL	**6**	**13**	**14**	**61**	**6**
Sex					
Men	5	12	9	67	7
Women	7	14	19	55	5
Education					
College	5	10	16	63	6
High school	6	14	13	61	6
Occupation					
White collar	4	16	11	63	6
Blue collar	6	10	17	62	5
Oldest Child Attends					
High school	7	14	13	63	3
Elementary school	6	12	16	60	6
Oldest Child's Class Standing					
Above average	4	12	15	63	6
Average or below	9	15	14	60	2

The Right to Choose a Child's School

In 1986, although two out of three parents (68%) said they would like to have the right to choose the local schools their children attend, relatively few – one in four – said they would take advantage of this right if it were available.

Interestingly, the percentage who would select a different school for their children (24%) corresponds roughly with the percentage of parents who rated their children's schools as either average or below average in performance (32%). Groups most in favor of the right to choose were women, parents of elementary school children, and those whose children were average or below average in academic standing.

The first question and the findings:

Do you wish you had the right to choose which public schools your children attend in this community?

Public School Parents	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %
TOTAL	**68**	**25**	**7**
Sex			
Men	62	33	5
Women	73	18	9
Education			
College	69	23	8
High school	67	28	5
Occupation			
White collar	64	27	9
Blue collar	69	25	6
Oldest Child Attends			
High school	65	28	7
Elementary school	72	23	5
Oldest Child's Class Standing			
Above average	66	29	5
Average or below	72	21	7

The second question and the findings:

If you could choose your children's schools among any of the public schools in this community, would you choose the ones they now attend or different ones?

Public School Parents	Same As Now %	Different Ones %	Don't Know %
TOTAL	**65**	**24**	**11**
Sex			
Men	76	14	10
Women	56	32	12
Education			
College	65	24	11
High school	68	23	9
Occupation			
White collar	63	26	11
Blue collar	70	22	8
Oldest Child Attends			
High school	62	28	10
Elementary school	70	21	9
Oldest Child's Class Standing			
Above average	72	20	8
Average or below	60	30	1[illegible]

Interest in Sending Children to Private and Parochial Schools

Survey findings in 1986 showed the public to be divided – 49% for, 46% against – on the desirability of sending their children to a private or parochial school, even if they had the means. This split was characteristic of every major population group, with one exception. Women were much more likely (57% to 38%) to say they would send their children to a *parochial* school than men (39% to 56%).

In 1986, a $600 voucher would have persuaded only about half of those parents interested in sending their children to a private or parochial school to actually do so. The $600 voucher would also have had very little influence on parents sending a child to another *public* school: only 6% said they would move their children out of the schools they were currently attending to another public school.

The question and the findings:

If you had the means, would you send any of your children to a private or church-related school?

Public School Parents	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %
TOTAL	**49**	**46**	**5**
Sex			
Men	39	56	5
Women	57	38	5
Education			
College	47	47	6
High school	50	47	3
Occupation			
White collar	44	50	6
Blue collar	49	48	3
Oldest Child Attends			
High school	47	51	2
Elementary school	52	44	4

Public School Parents	Yes	No	Don't Know
	%	%	%
Oldest Child's Class Standing			
Above average	48	48	4
Average or below	51	46	3

Time Spent Helping on Homework

Survey respondents were asked in 1986 to indicate about how many hours (if any) they spent helping their oldest child with his or her homework per week during the school year. Responses reveal some inconsistencies between professed attitudes and actual behavior.

Beginning in 1975, respondents in these surveys have expressed the belief that children, in elementary school and in high school, do not work hard enough. They have felt that schoolchildren – particularly high school students – should be given *more* homework. Moreover, the great majority of parents say they require their children to spend time on homework on school nights.

On the other hand, judging by the number of hours that parents claim to help their children with homework during an average school week, parents seem less helpful than they might be. Fully one-third of parents said in 1986 that they did not spend *any* time assisting their children with homework and on average spent only about 1½ hours per *week*. This compares somewhat unfavorably with the 1½ hours per *day* they say they require their children to spend on homework.

The question and the findings:

During the school year, on average, about how many hours a week do you help your oldest child with his or her homework?

	Public School Parents
	%
None	34
Up to 1 hour	13
1 - 1:59 hours	17
2 - 2:59 hours	10
3 - 3:59 hours	7
4 - 4:59 hours	5
5 - 5:59 hours	4
6 hours or more	5
Undesignated	5

Teachers: Testing, Salaries, Shortages

Pressing issues involving teachers were investigated in 1986: the public's attitudes toward teacher competency tests, attitudes toward teacher salary levels, and views on strategies for attracting teachers in shortage areas such as math, science, and technical and vocational subjects.

As shown in three previous education surveys, there was overwhelming, across-the-board support for teacher competency testing. In the 1986 survey, more than eight Americans in 10 favored such tests (85%), almost the identical percentage supporting the idea in 1979.

Interestingly, the level of support for competency tests was virtually the same as that for tests to prove teachers' knowledge *before* they are awarded a teaching certificate, as reported in the annual education surveys in 1979 and again in 1981.

The public still felt that teacher salaries are too low, an attitude revealed on numerous past surveys. In the 1986 survey, 49% of the respondents favored a teacher salary figure higher than the salary they thought teachers actually received. In contrast, only 14% felt that teachers should receive *less* than they were thought to make. Specifically, the public thought that beginning teachers, on average, received $16,500 (which was close to the actual national average), but thought they *deserved* to make almost $5,000 more, or $21,000.

On the subject of more pay for teachers in such shortage areas as math and science, the public continued to be roughly divided on the idea, 48% for to 44% against. This virtually matched the proportion of support found in 1984 but showed some decline in approval since a 1981 survey. There was strong support (83%) for increasing the number of college scholarships for those who would agree to become teachers in shortage areas. Only two in 10 respondents, however, favored relaxing teacher education and certification standards as a means of attracting teachers in these areas.

The teacher competency testing question and the findings:

In your opinion, should experienced teachers be periodically required to pass a statewide basic competency test in their subject area or areas or not?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, they should	85	84	87	87
No	11	11	11	13
Don't know	4	5	2	*

*Less than one-half of 1%.

The question on teacher salaries and the findings:

This card lists various income categories. What do you think the annual salary should be for a beginning public school teacher in this community with a bachelor's degree and teaching certificate?

Now, what do you think the salary actually is in this community for a beginning teacher with a bachelor's degree and teaching certificate?

Salary Categories	What People Think Beginning Teachers Should Be Paid	What People Think Beginning Teachers Are Actually Paid
	%	%
Less than $10,000	3	3
$10,000 - $11,999	4	7
$12,000 - $13,999	6	12
$14,000 - $15,999	13	15
$16,000 - $17,999	12	16
$18,000 - $19,999	16	11
$20,000 - $24,999	19	6

Salary Categories	What People Think Beginning Teachers Should Be Paid %	What People Think Beginning Teachers Are Actually Paid %
$25,000 - $29,999	8	3
$30,000 and over	6	2
Don't know	13	25

Average salary deserved: $21,300
Median salary deserved: $19,500

The chart below treats these data in another way:

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Deserve higher salary than perceived as being paid	49	47	55	56
Deserve lower salary than perceived as being paid	14	14	15	8
Deserve same salary as perceived	10	9	10	13
Don't know	27	30	20	23

Population groups most likely to feel that teachers were underpaid were college graduates, those in the highest income category, younger people, and those living in the center cities. For example, among persons in the over-$40,000 annual income category, 69% felt that teachers were underpaid compared to only 9% who said the opposite. Comparable figures for college graduates were 67% to 7%; for persons under 30, 58% to 16%; and for those living in the center cities, 57% to 14%.

There was one important regional difference: 44% of Western respondents thought beginning teachers should be paid $20,000 or more. The comparable figure for the East was 29%, for the Midwest 31%, and for the South 31%.

The first question on teacher shortages and the findings:

Today there is a shortage of teachers in science, math, technical subjects, and vocational subjects. If your local schools needed teachers in these subjects, would you favor or oppose paying them higher wages than teachers of other subjects?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	48	48	48	54
Oppose	44	43	47	43
Don't know	8	9	5	3

	NATIONAL TOTALS		
	1986 %	1984 %	1981 %
Favor	48	48	50
Oppose	44	43	35
No opinion	8	9	15

The question on strategies for relieving shortages and the findings:

If your local schools needed teachers in science, math, technical subjects, and vocational subjects, would you favor or oppose these proposals?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Increasing the number of scholarships to college students who agree to enter teacher training programs in these subjects?				
Favor	83	81	88	89
Oppose	11	11	9	11
Don't know	6	8	3	*
Relaxing teacher education and certification plans so more people could qualify to teach these subjects?				
Favor	18	18	19	31
Oppose	74	73	77	67
Don't know	8	9	4	2

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Chapter 20
The Nineteenth Annual Poll, 1987

Events of the Year in Education

Students at risk generated a year of concern, action, and re-examination of actions by school systems.

Who are students at risk? They are boys and girls, from age 6 up to 18 and 20, making up one-third of the total enrollment, whose school, home, and community have failed them. Or, to put it another way, they are students who do not get the education, help, and services they need to become happy and productive citizens.

The essential characteristic of an at-risk student is that he or she is failing in school. Such students are apathetic in the classroom, uninvolved, "disconnected." They get a disproportionate share of punishment by teachers and principals. They drop out in large numbers.

Large numbers of students at risk are blacks, Hispanics, or members of other minorities. They are likely to be children of divorce, of broken homes, of single-parent families struggling to survive. Most often poverty is their lot. They are victims of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco abuse. They are sexually overactive and become afflicted by unwanted pregnancies. Unable to cope with their problems, some are driven to suicide.

Over the years, at-risk students have been the subject of debate – and some remedial action – in Congress and in about a score of state legislatures. In 1987 three prestigious national groups reaffirmed their commitment to the at-risk student.

The 50 state superintendents of education, acting through the Council of Chief State School Officers, declared: "No moral or sensible nation can dare write off a significant portion of its human assets in the way that we are currently doing with regard to those students least likely to graduate from high school." The council urged states and local districts to guarantee that they will reduce dropout rates to zero by the year 2000.

The Committee for Economic Development (New York, N.Y.) declared that "30% of the students in the public schools face a major risk of educational failure and lifelong dependency" because of inadequate school programs. The committee, which has a strong tie to business and industry, called for "early and sustained intervention in the lives of disadvantaged children in school and out."

The American Association of School Administrators (Arlington, Va.) stressed its resolution to help local school districts attack the at-risk problem. Using the results of a 1987 survey of administrators, the AASA pointed to scores of successful actions taken at the local level for the benefit of at-risk students. Among actions taken:

- Revising subject matter offerings to hold the interest of minority students.
- Revamping instructional procedures to guarantee some measure of success by students.
- Setting up alternative schools and curricula.
- Offering more practical courses for students identified as potential dropouts.
- Providing larger doses of counseling to students in trouble.
- Offering instruction to enhance the self-esteem of students.
- Setting up inservice education for teachers and principals to help them become more sensitive to the needs and problems of the disadvantaged.

Phenomenon of the year, possibly of the decade: A scholar writes a book and people buy it in such numbers that it stays on best-seller lists for months.

The scholar: Allan Bloom, professor of social thought, University of Chicago. The book: *The Closing of the American Mind*. The theme: in the author's words – "how higher education has failed democracy and impoverished the souls of today's students."

Much of the book is a learned survey of political philosophy, concentrating on the role of rational thought in life and language. Reviewers and critics agreed it is not an easy book to read. The author draws from the works of Aristotle, Francis Bacon, Albert Camus, Descartes, Hegal, Kant, Nietzsche, Rousseau, Socrates, Voltaire, and Xenophon. He also cites Woody Allen, Calvin Coolidge, Benny Goodman, Mick Jagger, Ronald Reagan, J.D. Salinger, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and Kurt Weill.

The point that caught popular attention was the author's attack on American universities and his charge that they have failed to imbue students with the great values and truths of Western civilization. Such verities are transmitted by "the Great Books" and the classics, but college teachers are weak in leading students to them. As a result, Bloom says, students are in a spiritual void, stripped of patriotic and religious certainties and lacking anything to replace them – that is, anything Bloom would approve.

While praising his calm, scholarly discussion of the role of philosophy in life, some critics took exception to Bloom's often violent condemnations of the activism of college students, watered-down college textbooks, bland classroom discussions, and such modern expressions of culture as, for example, rock music. Example: "Rock music has one appeal only, a barbaric appeal, to sexual desire. . . . Rock music provides premature ecstasy, and in this respect, is like the drugs with which it is allied."

Hundreds of statements in the book expressed in similar language have led some critics to accuse Bloom of being "a right-wing reactionary." The author was surprised by such charges and denied them.

A discussion of intellectual content – as distinguished from talk about school money, politics, and organization – became dominant during 1987. It centered on the question, What does it take to be a cultured American? The answer came from E.D. Hirsch Jr., professor at the University of Virginia, in a book called *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. Hirsch's answer, a list of 4,500 names, places, myths, events, and phenomena. Additions and deletions will come from time to time, Hirsch promised.

The list starts with 1066, date of the Battle of Hastings, and goes through a panoply of gods, generals, politicians, poets, musicians, and actors. Included are (here chosen at random) Betsy Ross, Bach, the Beatles, Greta Garbo, the 23rd Psalm, the Ten Commandments, Remember the Alamo (as well as Pearl Harbor and the Maine).

Said the author, "Preschool is not too early for starting instruction in literate national culture. Fifth grade is almost too late." Said Education Secretary Bennett: "This is an important book that should change what goes on in our nation's classrooms."

Americans looked at the textbooks their schools use and many didn't like what they saw.

Criticism of textbooks has been a recurring phenomenon in the United States for decades, and so has been their defense. Educators have called the textbook "indispensable for every teacher," and publishers have called them "the golden thread that ties generations of school children." Yet, it was a public (and professional) outcry that drove Dick, Jane, Alice, and Jerry and their "Run, run, run. . ." from elementary readers in the 1970s. And in 1987, textbook criticism flared high with charges that:

- texts are generally "dumbed down" because authors use limited and controlled language, dictated by readability formulas;
- texts are bland because authors avoid controversial subjects;
- texts are often behind the times, failing to include the latest facts in science, mathematics, history, and other disciplines;
- texts are weighed down with dry facts and fail to encourage problem solving, thinking, and reasoning skills.

The 1987 controversy was ignited by five major studies from a variety of sources that accused publishers of inadequate coverage of religion in social studies texts, even as sanctioned by the U.S. Supreme Court. At a conference called by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) to explore the state of textbooks, the publishers complained that 1987 was "textbook bashing year." They argued that the textbook is a product of market forces – "We publish what you educators want, what your selection committees will recommend, and what the administrators will buy." As for not including material about religion, the industry said, "That's because teachers and curriculum directors are not asking for it. They're afraid to take it up in class."

The Council for Basic Education entered the year's controversy by saying that education authorities must accept part of the blame for the "dumbed down" textbook. The CBE said that all 50 states have policies, regulations, or traditions requiring texts to adhere to readability formulas. Said the council, "The result is a thin stream of staccato prose winding through an excessive number of pictures, boxes, and charts."

Among the year's proposals for getting "smarter textbooks":

- abandoning use of readability formulas,
- greater involvement of teachers in textbook selection, and
- employment of "bold writers" who are not afraid and know how to treat controversy in instructional material.

Poll Findings

The 1987 poll focused heavily on education policies pursued by the Reagan Administration over the 1981-87 period while continuing to track trends in opinion on other questions.

The decision to assess what the public thought about education questions the President chose to emphasize was influenced by notable policy changes that had already been made. For example, federal expenditures for educational programs, after a long period of growth, had been constrained. In its 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*, the National Commission on Excellence in Education called for higher school standards and increased competition among schools and students. Passage of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 had reduced categorical program aid to schools and increased the influence of state education agencies by making block grants to states. U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett chose as the hallmark of his tenure an emphasis on the "three C's": parental *choice*, *character* education, and the *content* of the curriculum.

The 1987 poll questions were developed primarily by David L. Clark, former dean of the School of Education, Indiana University, who now leads the Department of Educational Leadership, University of Virginia. Clark also wrote the report of poll findings, collaborating with Alec Gallup.

Government and the Schools

In the September 1984 *Kappan*, President Reagan argued that "we must restore parents and state and local governments to their rightful place in the educational process. . . . Decisions about discipline, curriculum, and academic standards . . . shouldn't be made by people in Washington. They should be made at the local level by parents, teachers, and

administrators in their own communities." The public agreed, but there was no indication that the American people wanted to cut *any level* of government out of the education arena.

The people felt that the closer to home the source of policy influence is, the better. Asked whether they favored more or less government influence in the improvement of schools, 37% of the respondents favored more federal influence in school improvement, 55% favored more state influence, and 62% favored more local influence. Only at the federal level did a plurality of respondents favor less influence (39% to 37%); at the local level, more than four times as many respondents favored more government influence than favored less (62% to 14%).

In one instance, the public did not favor vesting authority in local government. Asked who should check to determine whether local schools are conforming to the minimum standards set by the state, the public preferred the state by a 3 to 2 margin. Thus the concern of the public for minimum standards superseded its concern for local control.

One special issue surrounding the control of schools was what is termed disestablishment, that is, dismantling the U.S. Department of Education (ED). ED was established near the end of the Carter Administration. Nearly one-fourth of those queried did not know whether they favored disestablishment. The remainder were divided almost equally on the question: 39% favored dismantling ED; 37% preferred to keep it intact.

The first question and the findings:

Would you like the federal government in Washington to have more influence, or less influence, on improving the local public schools? How about the state government? How about the local government?

	Federal Government		State Government		Local Government	
	National Totals	Public School Parents	National Totals	Public School Parents	National Totals	Public School Parents
	%	%	%	%	%	%
More	37	41	55	59	62	67
Less	39	42	21	22	15	14
Same amount*	14	10	15	14	15	14
Don't know	10	7	9	5	8	5

*Those who said "same amount" volunteered that answer.

The second question and the findings:

In most cases, the state sets the minimum education standards in the local public schools. Who do you think should check to determine how well the local schools are conforming to these standards: the states or the local schools themselves?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
States	47	47	48	49
Local schools	29	28	30	32
Both*	15	13	18	14
Don't know	9	12	4	5

*Those who said "both" volunteered that answer.

The third question and the findings:

About 10 years ago a new federal Department of Education was established. The present Administration says that such a department is not needed and that its functions should be performed by a smaller agency or by other departments of the government. Do you agree or disagree with this view?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Agree	39	37	42	47
Disagree	37	36	40	37
Don't know	24	27	18	16

Perceived Improvement in Local Public Schools

In view of the emphasis on education reform after publication of *A Nation at Risk*, respondents were asked whether, in the past five years, the public schools in their community had improved, gotten worse, or stayed the same. In general, the public reported sensing very little overall improvement. However, more public school parents (33%) felt that the public schools had improved than felt that they had grown worse (21%).

The question and the findings:

Would you say that the public schools in this community had improved from, say, five years ago, gotten worse, or stayed about the same?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Improved	25	21	33	26
Gotten worse	22	22	21	23
Stayed about the same	36	36	36	42
Don't know	17	21	10	9

Perceived Improvement in Student Achievement

A plurality of the public believed that, for students of all ability levels, achievement was about the same in 1987 as it was five years earlier. Public school parents were less likely than nonpublic school parents or respondents with no children in school to believe that student achievement had gotten worse. More public school parents and nonpublic school parents believed that achievement had improved more for students of above-average ability than for students of average ability or for students of below-average ability.

The first question and the findings:

Compared to five years ago, would you say that student achievement in the local public schools has improved, gotten worse, or stayed about the same for students with above-average ability?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Improved	27	23	34	29
Gotten worse	11	12	10	14
Stayed about the same	41	39	45	38
Don't know	21	26	11	19

The second question and the findings:

Compared to five years ago, would you say that student achievement in the local public schools has improved, gotten worse, or stayed about the same for students with *average* ability?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Improved	19	17	24	29
Gotten worse	14	15	12	15
Stayed about the same	45	42	53	40
Don't know	22	26	11	16

The third question:

Compared to five years ago, would you say that student achievement in the local public schools has improved, gotten worse, or stayed about the same for students with *below-average* ability?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Improved	20	17	28	23
Gotten worse	22	23	18	26
Stayed about the same	35	32	39	36
Don't know	23	28	15	15

Raising Standards

By stunning margins, the public was confident that raising standards of academic achievement would improve the quality of education. The public felt – by a 7 to 1 margin – that telling school districts to require higher academic achievement of students would help school quality. Nonpublic school parents were almost unanimous in endorsing this strategy.

The question and the findings:

Some school districts have been told that they must require higher academic achievement of their students. Do you think this requirement would help or hurt the quality of the public schools in this community?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Help quality	76	74	79	89
Hurt quality	11	10	13	6
Don't know	13	16	8	5

Effect on Students from Disadvantaged Backgrounds

One in three respondents (30%) expressed some concern about the effect of increased standards of achievement on students from low-income backgrounds. But a clear majority (52%) said that they thought such a move would encourage these students to do better.

The question and the findings:

Some people say that raising achievement standards will encourage students from low-income backgrounds to do better in school. Others say that raising the standards will put these students at such a disadvantage that they will become discouraged about school or will even drop out. Do you think that raising achievement standards will encourage students from poor backgrounds to do better in school, or will it cause them to become discouraged or to drop out?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, encourage	52	52	51	60
No, discourage	30	27	37	28
Don't know	18	21	12	12

Reporting Achievement for Comparison

In his 1984 State of the Union Address, President Reagan asserted, "Just as more incentives are needed within our schools, greater competition is needed among our schools. Without standards and competition there can be no champions, no records broken, no excellence – in education or any other walk of life." The public agreed. Seventy percent favored reporting the results of achievement tests by state and by school, so that comparisons can be made. The public felt that such comparisons would serve as incentives to local public schools, whether the results showed higher or lower scores for local students.

The first question and the findings:

It is now being proposed that educational achievement test results be reported on a state-by-state and school-by-school basis, so that comparisons can be made between schools of similar size and racial and economic make-up. Do you favor or oppose this proposal?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	70	67	75	78
Oppose	14	13	17	17
Don't know	16	20	8	5

The second question and the findings:

Let's assume that the students in the local public schools received *higher* test results than students in comparable schools elsewhere. Do you think this would serve as an incentive for the local schools to do an even better job or not?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	72	69	77	76
No	12	12	15	13
Don't know	16	19	8	11

The third question and the findings:

Let's assume that the students in the public schools in this community received *lower* test scores than students in comparable schools elsewhere. Do you think this would encourage the local schools to try to do a better job or not?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	72	69	79	75
No	12	12	12	14
Don't know	16	19	9	11

Support for Parental Choice

President Reagan and Secretary Bennett had pressed consistently for an expansion of parental choice. Respondents were asked about increasing parental choice with regard to the local schools their children attended. Seven of 10 Americans thought that parents should have the right to choose. Asked, more specifically, if they would favor a voucher system to enable parents to choose among public, parochial, or private schools, respondents supported the idea by a narrow margin, as they had since 1981.

The lukewarm support for vouchers, in contrast to the public's broad support for choice, seemed to stem from a concern that vouchers might hurt the public schools. The public was almost evenly divided on the question of whether a voucher system would hurt (42%) or help (36%) local public schools. Those who felt that a voucher system would hurt local schools were overwhelmingly opposed to vouchers (81% to 7%). Those who thought it would help local schools favored vouchers (73% to 16%).

The question and the findings:

Do you think that parents in this community should or should not have the right to choose which local schools their children attend?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	71	68	76	81
No	20	20	21	15
Don't know	9	12	3	4

Support for Vouchers

The first question and the findings:

In some nations, the government allots a certain amount of money for each child's education. The parents can then send the child to any public, parochial, or private school they choose. This is called the "voucher system." Would you like to see such an idea adopted in this country?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	44	42	49	49
No	41	42	40	46
Don't know	15	16	11	5

NATIONAL TOTALS

	1987	1986	1985	1983	1981	1971	1970
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Favor	44	46	45	51	43	38	43
Oppose	41	41	40	38	41	44	46
Don't know	15	13	15	11	16	18	11

The second question and the findings:

How about the public schools in this community? Do you think the voucher system would help or hurt the local schools?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Help local schools	36	35	38	37
Hurt local schools	42	41	44	49
Don't know	22	24	18	14

	National	Those in Favor	Those Opposed
	%	%	%
Help	36	73	7
Hurt	42	16	81
Don't know	22	11	12

Parental Input on Curriculum, Instructional Materials, and Library Books

No equivocation existed regarding parental input in setting the curriculum or in the selection of instructional materials and library books. Overwhelmingly, the public felt that parents of public school students should have more (45%) rather than less (8%) to say about the courses that are offered. Thirty-seven percent of respondents felt that parents have about the right amount of say in determining the curriculum.

Despite concerns about censorship, the public also felt that parents should have more, rather than less, influence in the selection of instructional materials (38% to 14%) and in the selection of books placed in school libraries (36% to 16%). Thirty-nine percent felt that the public has about the right amount of say in the selection of instructional materials; 38% felt that the public has the right amount of say in the selection of books for school libraries.

The first question and the findings:

Do you feel that parents of public school students should have more say, less say, or do they have about the right amount of say regarding the curriculum, i.e., the courses offered?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
More say	45	40	51	65
Less say	8	10	5	4
Right amount	37	37	41	26
Don't know	10	13	3	5

The second question and the findings:

Do you feel that parents of public school students should have more say, less say, or do they have about the right amount of say regarding instructional materials?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
More say	38	36	42	50
Less say	14	15	10	12
Right amount	39	36	46	34
Don't know	9	13	2	4

The third question and the findings:

Do you feel that parents of public school students should have more say, less say, or do they have about the right amount of say regarding the books placed in school libraries?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
More say	36	34	40	47
Less say	16	17	11	14
Right amount	38	36	45	33
Don't know	10	13	4	6

Emphasis on the Basics

Few respondents doubted the efficacy of increasing the number of required courses in basic subjects (for example, math and science), even at the expense of electives. Indeed, three-fourths of the public felt that doing so would improve the quality of the schools. Only 28% of the public felt that elementary schools were giving enough attention to the three R's. However, nearly half of the public school parents (46%) believed that enough time was given to those subjects in the elementary grades.

For students who plan to attend college, more than 70% of the respondents would require at least five basic subjects: mathematics, English, history, science, and computer training. More than half would require career education, business education, foreign language, and health education. The 1987 poll revealed an increased desire for required core courses for college-bound students since 1985, when this question was last included in the poll.

The respondents also tended to favor increasing the number of required courses for students who do not plan to go on to college. However, there was less agreement on which courses to require. More than 70% of the public would require mathematics, English, and vocational training. More than half would require history, business education, computer training, career education, and science.

At all grade levels, the public was concerned that every student have adequate exposure to and training in the basics. Moreover, the public did not have great difficulty defining what is basic: English and mathematics are basic for all students at all levels; history, science, and computer training are not far behind; vocational, career, or business education is a basic for the non-college-bound student.

The first question and the findings:

Some school districts have been told that they must require students to take more courses in basic subjects, such as math and science, thus reducing the number of elective courses students can take. Do you think this requirement would improve or hurt the quality of the public schools in this community?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Improve quality	75	74	76	85
Hurt quality	11	9	16	7
Don't know	14	17	8	8

The second question and the findings:

Is it your impression that the public elementary schools give enough attention, or not enough attention, to reading, writing, and arithmetic?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Enough	28	21	46	23
Not enough	58	62	47	67
Right amount*	6	6	5	6
Don't know	8	11	2	4

*Those who said "right amount" volunteered that answer.

Required Core Courses

The first question and the findings:

Please look over this card, which lists high school subjects. If you were the one to decide, what subjects would you require every high school student who *plans to go on to college* to take?

	For Those Planning to Go to College				
	1987	1985	1984	1983	1981
	%	%	%	%	%
Mathematics	94	91	96	92	94
English	91	88	94	88	91
History/U.S. government	84	76	84	78	83
Science	83	76	84	76	76
Computer training	72	71	—	—	—
Career education	63	57	—	—	—

	For Those Planning to Go to College				
	1987	1985	1984	1983	1981
	%	%	%	%	%
Business education	59	59	68	55	60
Foreign language	56	53	57	50	54
Health education	54	48	52	43	47
Physical education	45	40	43	41	44
Vocational training*	31	27	37	32	34
Music	23	24	22	18	26
Art	23	23	24	19	28

*In 1981 this subject was called "industrial arts/homemaking."

The second question and the findings:

What about those public high school students who do *not plan to go to college* when they graduate? Which courses would you require them to take?

	For Those *Not* Planning to Go to College				
	1987	1985	1984	1983	1981
	%	%	%	%	%
Mathematics	88	85	92	87	91
English	85	81	90	83	89
Vocational training	78	75	83	74	64
History/U.S. government	69	61	71	63	71
Business education	65	60	76	65	75
Computer training	61	57	—	—	—
Career education	61	57	—	—	—
Science	57	51	61	53	58
Health education	49	43	50	42	46
Physical education	41	40	44	40	43
Foreign language	20	17	19	19	21

Character Education in the Schools

Secretary of Education William Bennett made character education one of his primary emphases. The 1987 poll respondents were asked whether they thought courses on personal values and ethical behavior should be taught in the public schools or left to the parents and the churches. Forty-three percent said that such courses should be taught in the schools, and another 13% volunteered that schools, parents, and churches should all be involved.

The question and the findings:

It has been proposed that the public schools include courses on "character education" to help students develop personal values and ethical behavior. Do you think that courses on values and ethical behavior should be taught in the public schools, or do you think that this should be left to the students' parents and the churches?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, schools	43	42	45	54
No, parents and churches	36	36	38	31
Both*	13	13	13	11
Don't know	8	9	4	4

*Those who said "both" volunteered that answer.

Content of Character Education Courses

All respondents were also asked: 1) whether it would be possible to develop character education courses acceptable to most of the people in their communities, 2) who should have the most to say about the content of such courses, and 3) whether those students who objected to the content of character education courses should be excused from attendance.

Six of 10 Americans (62%) thought that it would be possible to develop subject matter for coursework on ethics and values that would be acceptable to most of the residents of their communities. Only about two of 10 (23%) felt that this would not be possible.

By a substantial margin, Americans felt that parents should have the most influence on the content of character education courses. Forty-two percent mentioned parents. The school board, mentioned by 24%, was the next most frequently mentioned group. Relatively far behind were teachers (14%) and administrators (10%). The state and federal governments were at the bottom, named by only 9% and 5% respectively.

By a margin of almost 5 to 3, respondents favored excusing students from character education classes if their parents object to what is taught.

The first question:

Do you think that it would be possible or not possible to develop subject matter for a character education course that would be acceptable to most of the people in this community?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Possible	62	59	68	78
Not possible	23	24	22	17
Don't know	15	17	10	5

The second question and the findings:

If courses about values and ethical behavior were required in the local public schools, who do you think should have the most to say about the content of the courses? The federal government in Washington, the state government, the local school board, the school administrators, the teachers, or the parents?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Parents	42	39	49	43
Local school board	24	24	24	30
Teachers	14	14	17	15
School administrators	10	11	8	7
State government	9	9	7	10
Federal government	5	5	5	6
Don't know	12	14	9	6

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

The third question and the findings:

If students or their parents objected to what was taught in these classes, do you think the students should be excused from these classes or not?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes, excused	52	49	57	62
No, not excused	37	37	37	32
Don't know	11	14	6	6

School Prayer

President Reagan has always been unequivocal in his advocacy of school prayer. So has the general public. In 1987, 78% of the public were aware of the fact that an amendment to the U.S. Constitution had been proposed allowing school prayer. Within that group, 68% favored the amendment and 26% opposed it. Almost three-fourths of the total sample (71%) felt that only a small percentage of the population would be offended by school prayer.

The first question and the findings:

Do you favor or oppose an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow prayer in the public schools?

Asked of those aware of the amendment	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	68	68	69	59
Oppose	26	26	26	35
Don't know	6	6	5	6

The second question and the findings:

Do you think that a small percentage or a large percentage of the public would be offended if prayer were permitted in the public schools?

	National Totals %	Those Who Favor Prayer %	Those Who Oppose Prayer %
Large percentage	18	12	35
Small percentage	71	78	53
Don't know	11	10	12

Tasks the Federal Government Should Undertake

Respondents to the 1987 poll were asked whether or not the federal government should undertake each of 11 different tasks that pertain to public education. Some eight of 10 Americans favored federal involvement in requiring state and local systems to meet minimum standards (84%), advising and encouraging state and local systems to deal with national problems (83%), identifying important national problems (81%), promoting educational programs intended to solve social problems (80%), and funding programs to deal with important national educational problems (78%).

Some seven of 10 Americans favored federal efforts to recognize the achievement of students, teachers, and schools (76%), to support a national testing program for public school students (74%), to collect and report education statistics (73%), to fund research and development (72%), and to provide financing for fellowships and scholarships for college students (72%).

The question and the findings:

This card lists various things that the federal government in Washington might do for education in America. As I read off each item, would you tell me whether it is something that you think that the government should do, or should not do, for American education?

	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %
Require states and local school districts to meet minimum educational standards	84	10	6
Advise and encourage state and local educational systems to deal with important national problems in education, such as illiteracy and poor math achievement	83	10	7
Identify important national problems in education, such as illiteracy and poor math achievement	81	12	7
Promote educational programs intended to help solve such social problems as poverty and unequal opportunities for minorities, women, and the handicapped	80	12	8
Fund programs to deal with important national educational problems, such as illiteracy and poor math achievement	78	15	7
Provide recognition and awards for high achievement by students, teachers, and schools	76	17	7
Support a national testing program for public school students	74	17	9
Collect and report information and statistics that measure the performance of education in the nation	73	18	9
Fund research and development in areas of need, such as the curriculum and teaching methods	72	19	9
Provide financing for scholarships and fellowships for college students	72	20	8
Provide financial aid to the states through block grants that can be used for education or for any other purpose	57	30	13

Liberal Arts Degrees for Teachers

Despite relatively high grades given to teachers by the American public, the 1987 survey showed a demand for higher standards and requirements for teaching personnel. In the 1986 poll, 85% of the public favored requiring experienced teachers to pass a statewide test of basic competence in their subject areas. Three previous education polls showed across-the-board support for teacher competency testing.

In 1987 the public was asked whether or not a prospective teacher should be required to have a four-year liberal arts degree with a *subject-matter major* before entering a teacher training program. This requirement, which had

been advocated by two major reform groups in teacher education (the Carnegie Forum on Teaching and the Holmes Group), was favored by 72% of the public. Only 17% opposed it.

The question and the findings:

A recommendation has been made that anyone who wants to become a public school teacher must have a four-year liberal arts degree with a major in some subject before he or she can enter any teacher training program. Do you favor or oppose this recommendation?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	72	70	76	75
Oppose	17	16	19	19
Don't know	11	14	5	6

Support for Sex Education

Although results of the 1987 Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa survey showed no statistically significant increase over the previous two years in support for sex education, a substantial increase in the percentage of those favoring sex education had been recorded since the question was first asked in 1981. In that year, the inclusion of sex education in the public school curriculum was favored by a substantial majority (70%) for high school students and by less than a majority (45%) for elementary students. In 1987, 76% of the public favored sex education for high school students and 55% supported sex education in elementary school.

The first question and the findings:

Do you feel that the public high schools should or should not include sex education in their instructional program?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Should	76	73	82	81
Should not	16	16	14	18
Don't know	8	11	4	1

The second question and the findings:

Do you feel that the public elementary schools should or should not include sex education in grades 4 through 8?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Should	55	52	60	69
Should not	37	38	35	29
Don't know	8	10	5	2

Topics to Be Covered in Sex Education

As for specific topics that should be covered in sex education, somewhat more liberal attitudes appeared to prevail in 1987 than was the case in 1981. Approximately 4% more of the public than in 1981 found coverage of the seven topics selected for evaluation acceptable – both for high school students and for elementary students.

Large differences emerged between those topics that are acceptable in high school and those that are acceptable in elementary school. The two exceptions to this rule were the biology of reproduction and teenage pregnancy, which more than eight of 10 Americans felt should be covered in both the elementary schools and the high schools. Eight of 10 Americans thought venereal disease, AIDS, and birth control should be covered in high school classes, but only about half would include these topics in the elementary school curriculum. A distinct minority would include the topics of homosexuality, premarital sex, abortion, and the nature of sexual intercourse at the elementary level – a figure that has not increased since 1981.

The question and the findings:

Which of the following topics, if any, listed on this card should be included in sex education in high school? In elementary school?

	Topics That Should Be Included					
	In High School			In Elementary School		
	1987	1985	1981	1987	1985	1981
	%	%	%	%	%	%
AIDS*	84	—	—	58	—	—
Birth control	83	85	79	49	48	45
Venereal disease	86	84	84	59	49	52
Biology of reproduction	80	82	77	82	89	83
Premarital sex	66	62	60	37	34	40
Nature of sexual intercourse	61	61	53	41	45	36
Abortion	60	60	54	28	28	26
Homosexuality	56	48	45	30	28	33
Teen pregnancy*	84	—	—	87	—	—

*These topics were not included in the earlier surveys.
(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

The Public's Knowledge of Local Schools

The public was asked in the 1987 poll to appraise its own knowledge of local schools, and the results were troubling. Only 15% of the American public felt well-informed about local schools. Among public school parents this percentage rose to only 25%. Most disturbing was the fact that a majority of those without children in school (55%) either asserted they were not well-informed or said "don't know." In contrast, fewer than one-fourth of the public school parents said they were *not* well-informed.

Responses were roughly the same when parents were asked about the information they had regarding the advantages and disadvantages of local schools and about the local school curriculum. In both instances, approximately one-fourth of public school parents admitted to little knowledge. If parents are to make informed choices about the schools that their

children will attend (and both the public and Secretary Bennett endorsed giving them that choice), then they will need to be better-informed about schools and curricula. Only 21% of the parents felt well-informed about the relative advantages of local schools; 26% rated themselves as well-informed on the curriculum.

The first question and the findings:

Would you say that you are well-informed, fairly well-informed, or not well-informed about the local public school situation?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Well-informed	15	12	25	16
Fairly well-informed	39	33	51	47
Not well-informed	41	48	23	34
Don't know	5	7	1	3

The second question and the findings:

Would you say that you are well-informed, fairly well-informed, or not well-informed about the advantages and disadvantages of the various local public schools?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Well-informed	14	11	21	22
Fairly well-informed	36	30	51	41
Not well-informed	44	51	25	32
Don't know	6	8	3	5

The third question and the findings:

Would you say that you are well-informed, fairly well-informed, or not well-informed about what is being taught, what should be taught, or what should *not* be taught in the local public schools?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Well-informed	15	10	26	19
Fairly well-informed	36	32	48	41
Not well-informed	43	50	24	37
Don't know	6	8	2	3

The Public's Knowledge of Issues in Education

Few policy issues in education are likely to force their way onto the front pages of newspapers. In the 1987 poll, when 13 education issues were presented to public school parents who were then asked if they had heard or read *something* about them, only six issues were checked by more than half of the respondents.

Some items considered critical by the makers of education policy were barely visible to the general public. For example, only one in five people had heard about the introduction of character education courses in the public schools; only about one in four knew of the national achievement awards programs for students and schools or about voucher plans; roughly four in 10 had heard about efforts to transfer authority from the federal government to the states, to increase the number of required courses in school, to teach about the role of religion in this country and the world, or to foster parental choice of the schools their children attend. On the other end of the scale, three-fourths of the public school parents had heard about sex education and about efforts to introduce organized prayer in the schools.

What the people have heard about and what they are concerned about are not always the same. People are concerned about sex education (27%) and prayer in the schools (25%). But they also are concerned about voucher plans (24%), the transfer of authority to the states (19%), and parental choice of children's schools (23%) – all issues about which the majority questioned in 1987 claimed to have heard or read nothing.

The questions and the findings:

This card lists various issues related to public education in this country that have been discussed in the news recently. Would you read off, by letter, all of those issues, if any, that you have heard or read something about?

Which of these issues worry or concern you?

	Public School Parents	
	Heard or Read About	Worried or Concerned About
	%	%
Requiring sex education in the public schools	76	27
Permitting organized prayer in public schools	73	25
Requiring higher standards in the public schools	60	14
Recent efforts by the state government to improve public school education	59	15
Recent efforts by the federal government to improve public school education	53	14
Requiring higher achievement of public school students	52	14
Increasing the number of required courses in school and reducing the number of electives	40	14
Permitting parents more say about which local school their children attend	40	23
Teaching about the role played by religion in the history of this country and the world	38	17
Transferring the authority and responsibility for public education from the federal government to the state governments	36	19
Establishing national awards for high-performing public schools and for high-achieving public school students	28	11

	Public School Parents	
	Heard or Read About %	Worried or Concerned About %
Proposals to provide school vouchers to public school parents that could be used for any public, private, or church-related school	27	24
Introducing required courses in character education to develop personal values and ethical behavior	19	17

Most Important Problems Facing Local Public Schools in 1987

In 1986, for the first time, the public identified drug use (or abuse) as the most important problem facing the public schools. In 1987 drug use was again the number-one concern, and the percentage of the public mentioning it had increased from 28% to 30%. Four other problems increased by 3% each in frequency from 1986 to 1987: lack of proper financial support, 11% to 14%; difficulty in getting good teachers, 6% to 9%; large schools/overcrowding, 5% to 8%; and pupils' lack of interest/truancy, 3% to 6%.

Lack of discipline was cited by 22% of the respondents and remained the number-two problem with which Americans felt the public schools must deal.

The question and the findings:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the public schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Use of drugs	30	31	29	27
Lack of discipline	22	22	20	28
Lack of proper financial support	14	12	18	14
Difficulty in getting good teachers	9	9	10	9
Poor curriculum/poor standards	8	7	10	9
Large schools/ overcrowding	8	7	10	5
Moral standards	7	7	6	9
Parents' lack of interest	6	6	6	11
Pupils' lack of interest/truancy	6	7	5	4
Drinking/alcoholism	6	6	7	4
Teachers' lack of interest	5	4	7	12
Low teacher pay	5	4	5	9
Lack of respect for teachers/other students	4	4	5	8
Integration/busing	4	4	4	3
Crime/vandalism	3	4	2	5
Problems with administration	2	2	3	7
Lack of needed teachers	2	2	3	1
Lack of proper facilities	2	2	1	3
Transportation	1	1	2	*
Fighting	1	1	1	*
Too much emphasis on sports	1	1	1	*
Communication problems	1	1	1	*
Peer pressure	1	1	1	1
Mismanagement of funds/programs	1	1	1	1
Parents' involvement in school activities	1	1	*	*
School board politics	1	1	1	*
Too many schools/ declining enrollment	1	1	1	1
There are no problems	2	2	4	1
Miscellaneous	7	6	11	6
Don't know	14	17	7	8

*Less than one-half of 1%.
(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

Grading the Public Schools

If in 1987 more people felt that the public schools had improved over the past five years than felt they had gotten worse, that should have been reflected in the public's ratings of the local schools. And it was. The percentage of the public who gave the schools grades of A or B was up 2% in 1987, and the percentage who gave the schools a grade of C or higher was up 4%.

As had been the case in past polls, parents were more likely to give up the schools in their communities grades of A or B than were nonparents (56% to 39%). Those Americans who are most likely to give the schools high grades are the best-educated (that is, college graduates) and those in higher income categories (more than $30,000 a year). Those least likely to award the local public schools high marks tend to be younger (under age 30), less affluent, residents of central cities, and nonwhite.

One troublesome note in these data was the negative correlation between the level of satisfaction with the public schools and already-evident demographic shifts of the next 25 years. That is, the population groups most likely to grow in the coming decades were those most likely to express dissatisfaction with the public schools. This problem is exacerbated by the public's feeling that the reform movement had improved the schools *least* for students of below-average ability. Clark and Gallup said, "Barring a change in one of these factors, it is reasonable to predict that the grading of the public schools will decline sometime in the 1990s."

The first question and the findings:

Students are often given the grades A,B,C,D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A,B,C,D, or FAIL?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A + B	43	39	56	25
A	12	9	19	7
B	31	30	37	18
C	30	29	30	45
D	9	9	9	15
FAIL	4	4	3	8
Don't know	14	19	2	7

	A+B %	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**43**	**12**	**31**	**30**	**9**	**4**	**14**
Sex							
Men	42	12	30	34	9	3	12
Women	43	11	32	27	10	5	15
Race							
White	43	11	32	30	9	4	14
Nonwhite	35	14	21	34	11	8	12
Age							
18 to 29 years	36	8	28	34	12	4	14
30 to 49 years	44	13	31	33	10	5	8
50 years and over	46	13	33	25	6	4	19
Community Size							
1 million and over	35	10	25	29	13	7	16
500,000 - 999,999	42	12	30	37	7	3	11
50,000 - 499,999	44	12	32	34	7	4	11
2,500 - 49,999	45	15	30	26	7	3	19
Under 2,500	53	13	40	28	7	2	10
Central city	28	7	21	39	14	6	13
Education							
College	46	11	35	30	10	3	11
Graduate	49	12	37	26	11	3	11
Incomplete	42	9	33	33	10	4	11
High school	40	11	29	32	9	5	14
Graduate	43	12	31	33	10	3	11
Incomplete	35	9	26	30	7	8	20
Grade school	40	19	21	22	6	6	26
Income							
$40,000 and over	48	13	35	29	10	4	9
$30,000 - $39,999	47	13	34	31	10	3	9
$20,000 - $29,999	45	12	33	31	7	5	12
$10,000 - $19,999	35	8	27	32	9	4	20
Under $10,000	45	16	29	24	10	3	18
Region							
East	39	11	28	29	11	6	15
Midwest	45	13	32	29	7	4	15
South	47	12	35	30	7	4	12
West	36	10	26	34	13	4	13

Respondents also were asked to grade separately the high schools and the elementary schools in their communities. High schools received markedly lower ratings than elementary schools. Forty percent of the public at large and 51% of respondents with children in the public schools awarded the high schools in their community a grade of A or B. The elementary schools received an A or B from 52% of the public at large and from a remarkable 70% of public school parents.

The second question and the findings:

How about the public *high schools* in this community? What grade would you give them?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A+B	40	37	51	30
A	11	10	17	10
B	29	27	34	20
C	26	26	24	29
D	9	9	9	16
FAIL	4	4	3	10
Don't know	21	24	13	15

The third question and the findings:

How about the public *elementary schools* in this community? What grade would you give them?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A+B	52	46	70	45
A	16	12	28	11
B	36	34	42	34
C	22	22	19	36
D	4	4	5	5
FAIL	3	2	1	6
Don't know	19	26	5	8

National Ratings

When the public is asked to grade the schools in the nation as a whole, the grades drop. In 1987, only about one-fourth (26%) of the public gave the schools nationally a grade of A or B; 70% gave them a grade of C or higher. As was the case in previous polls, these ratings were sharply lower than the ratings of local public schools.

Once again, the 1987 survey found that the more familiar the grader is with a school, the higher the grade will tend to be. When parents were asked to grade the school their oldest child attended, 69% gave that school an A or B. Only 30% of these same public school parents gave an A or B to the schools nationwide. In the case of public schooling, familiarity breeds respect.

The first question and the findings:

How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally — A,B,C,D or FAIL?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A + B	26	25	30	17
A	4	3	7	4
B	22	23	23	13
C	44	44	42	59
D	11	9	14	12
FAIL	2	2	2	3
Don't know	17	19	12	9

The second question and the findings:

What grade would you give the school your oldest child attends?

	Total Public School Parents %	High School %	Elementary School %
A + B	69	66	74
A	28	21	33
B	41	45	41
C	20	26	17
D	5	4	6
FAIL	2	4	1
Don't know	4	*	2

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Grading School Personnel

Teachers in local public schools received high grades; 49% of the public gave teachers a grade of A or B, as they had in previous polls. Public school parents rated teachers even higher; nearly two-thirds (64%) gave them a grade of A or B.

For the second year in a row, the ratings given administrators lagged behind those given teachers; 43% of the public awarded public school administrators a grade of A or B. However, public school parents rated principals and other administrators much higher than they were rated by respondents with no children in school or by nonpublic school parents. Six of 10 public school parents graded principals A or B, while only about four of 10 other respondents did so.

Not surprisingly, the public grades the personnel in elementary schools more favorably than the personnel in high schools, just as it grades the elementary schools higher than the secondary schools. When respondents were asked to grade local teachers, the grades were lower for high school teachers (43% gave them grades of A or B) than for elementary school teachers (53% gave them grades of A or B). Similarly, the grades given high school principals were lower (38% A or B) than those given elementary school principals (47% A or B).

The first question and the findings:

What grade would you give the teachers in the public schools in this community — A,B,C,D, or FAIL?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A + B	49	44	64	44
A	15	12	24	12
B	34	32	40	32
C	25	25	25	31
D	6	5	7	9
FAIL	3	3	2	5
Don't know	17	23	2	11

The second question and the findings:

What grade would you give the principals and administrators in the public schools in this community?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A + B	43	37	59	37
A	14	10	23	11
B	29	27	36	26
C	27	27	25	29
D	9	8	8	13
FAIL	3	3	4	8
Don't know	18	25	4	13

High School vs. Elementary School

The first question and the findings:

How about the local public *high school* teachers?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A + B	43	40	51	39
A	12	10	17	11
B	31	30	34	28
C	24	24	24	26
D	8	8	8	14
FAIL	3	3	2	4
Don't know	22	25	15	17

The second question and the findings:

How about the local *elementary school* teachers?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A + B	53	47	71	51
A	18	14	30	14
B	35	33	41	37
C	21	21	17	29
D	4	4	5	8
FAIL	2	2	1	3
Don't know	20	26	6	9

The third question and the findings:

How about the local public *high school* principals and administrators?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
A + B	38	36	46	33
A	11	10	15	9
B	27	26	31	24
C	24	24	22	28
D	9	8	11	15
FAIL	5	5	4	8
Don't know	24	27	17	16

The fourth question and the findings:

How about the local *elementary school* principals and administrators?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
A + B	47	40	63	46
A	15	11	26	14
B	32	29	37	32
C	23	24	21	32
D	6	5	6	7
FAIL	2	2	2	4
Don't know	22	29	8	11

Chapter 21
The Twentieth Annual Poll, 1988

Events of the Year in Education

With President Reagan in attendance, education leaders gathered at the White House (April 26) to mark the fifth anniversary of *A Nation at Risk*, the federal report that started the 1980s reform movement with its warning of "a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future." The event was part of a broad assessment of the reform movement in all parts of the country.

Education Secretary William J. Bennett told the President and the assembled group that "American education has made some undeniable progress in the last five years. . . . But the level at which the improvement is taking place is still unacceptably low."

Across the street from the White House, the National Education Association gave its response: marchers carrying slogans attacking "the unfulfilled promises" of the report, Bennett, and the Reagan administration. NEA President Mary Hatwood Futrell issued statements saying that reform is "dying on the vine" because the administration failed to support it with federal dollars.

Albert Shanker, the American Federation of Teachers leader, used the occasion to break with Bennett (Shanker had been a mild supporter of the Secretary), charging that Bennett had used *A Nation at Risk* as a takeoff point for attacking teachers, teacher unions, and for denying that money is needed to carry out changes.

The one favorable mark *A Nation at Risk* received from a majority of educators was that "it got the people talking about schools and that changes are needed." Beyond that, assessments varied and were largely negative. Typical comments:

> The reform movement has not gotten to the heart of the problem. We're still testing everybody and putting the screws on the existing system even more. The problem is the existing system. And that has to change.
>
> — *Theodore H. Sizer, Brown University*

> The reform movement has not yet turned our attention to improving the working conditions of teachers and changing the instructional process.
>
> — *Ernest L. Boyer, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching*

> *A Nation at Risk* has awakened public interest in education but not necessarily because it was correct. It resulted in a lot of activity (among states and local districts) but a lot of that was not only *not* useful but was on the wrong track.
>
> — *Harold Howe II, former U.S. Commissioner of Education*

> Nothing has yet happened as a result of the report to improve schooling for the disadvantaged, the underachievers, and students at risk.
>
> — *Committee for Economic Development, New York*

A coalition of public schools, community colleges, industry, and the mass media emerged during the year to fight adult illiteracy.

The task was formidable. Between 17 million and 21 million adults were functionally illiterate, with basic skills at the fourth-grade level or below. Another 35 million were semi-literate, with skills below the eighth-grade level. The number of illiterate adults kept growing because students were dropping out of school.

One element of the coalition, called PLUS, was seeking to bring adult illiteracy to the nation's attention. An acronym for Project Literacy, U.S., PLUS asked more than 100 national organizations to take action against illiteracy. Barbara Bush, wife of the Vice President, served as a leader. Said Bush, "We're aiming for a literate America by the year 2000."

One reason business and industry supported the coalition was given by a Xerox official, "American business is having to hire one million workers each year who cannot read, write, or count and then spend $25 billion teaching them these basic skills." More than 50% of the respondents to a national survey reported employees having trouble with the simplest writing, reading, and arithmetic skills. Industry leaders estimated that illiteracy was costing $225 billion a year in lost industrial productivity and tax revenue.

State programs to foster adult literacy began with the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which created Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs through the public schools. Later private schools, community colleges, libraries, and other agencies joined the campaign against illiteracy. The 1988 push had as its purpose vastly increasing the amount of money and variety of programs for illiterate Americans.

School leaders have a right to control the contents of student publications. So declared the U.S. Supreme Court (January 13) in a decision that was hailed by some as giving administrators the needed power to review the student press; others denounced it as depriving students of their First Amendment rights.

The case began in Hazelwood (Mo.) East High School in 1983. In reviewing page proofs for the student newspaper, *Spectrum*, principal Robert Reynolds found two articles objectionable. One dealt with teen pregnancy, the other with

effects of divorce on students. Reynolds said the articles may have invaded privacy of sources, did not present all sides of the issues, and were not appropriate reading for younger students in the school. He decided the two articles must be deleted.

The students cried "Censorship!" and took the case to court. They argued that their constitutional rights to free expression had been violated. When the question finally reached the U.S. Supreme Court, the justices voted five to three against the students. In essence, the majority found that school administrators have the right to regulate student journalism as they would other parts of the curriculum.

William J. Bennett resigned as Secretary of Education. He told President Reagan he planned to leave in September to write a book and lecture on "the kinds of educational policies and practices you and I agree on."

Bennett's tenure – less than four years – was controversial. He was praised by Republican Party chairman Frank Fahrenkopf, "Bill has kept education in the public eye." But he was called "Our Secretary of Ignorance" by Sen. Lowell Weiker (R-Conn.) because Bennett "has consistently defended President Reagan's budget cuts for federal education programs."

Under Bennett's leadership, the Department of Education, which President Reagan had marked for extinction, became one of the most visible in Washington. He traveled tirelessly across the country, delivering innumerable speeches. Their content made him the darling of conservatives and the number-one target of the National Education Association and (later) of the American Federation of Teachers.

Even Bennett's critics admired his innovations. Periodically, he came before reporters and TV camera crews to present his wall charts – graphs of educational indicators by state. Wall charts summed up data on teacher salaries, teacher-pupil ratios, student achievement scores, average per-pupil expenditures, and school revenues. Regardless of the information presented, Bennett used the occasions to criticize school bureaucracies and teacher unions and to renew calls for a rigorous elementary and secondary curriculum, parental choice (vouchers), and "performance-based incentives for teachers" (merit pay).

He dramatized his perception of what secondary schools should teach by creating a fictional James Madison High, a model some critics said was "the ideal school of the 1930s for college-preparatory students." His ideal elementary school featured "responsible student discipline," family values, and reading taught by phonics. In his dream elementary school, Bennett would also have teachers stress problem solving in mathematics; and they would present science as an "adventure in discovery" rather than a grab-bag of facts and stunts.

Poll Findings

The 1988 poll is presented here in essentially the same form in which it appeared in the September 1988 *Phi Delta Kappan*, except for the sections on research procedure, composition and design of the sample, and acknowledgements.

Most Important Problems Facing Local Public Schools in 1988

The public had become acutely aware of drug abuse as a problem for U.S. public schools since 1986. When asked to identify the biggest problems with which the local public schools must deal, 32% of those interviewed for the 1988 Gallup education poll said "use of drugs by students." Lack of discipline was a distant second, mentioned by 19% of the respondents.

This was the third consecutive year in which the public identified drug abuse as the biggest local school problem. However, in 1986 only two percentage points separated the problem of drug abuse from the problem of discipline. In 1987 drug abuse was mentioned by 30% of the respondents, discipline by 22%. In the 17 Gallup education polls prior to 1986, the public identified discipline as the biggest problem for the local schools in each year except 1971, when "lack of proper financing" was first.

Ironically, overall drug use among young people continued a gradual decline in 1987, according to the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research; but the U.S. still had the highest rate of drug use among young people of the world's industrialized nations. More than half (57%) of high school seniors in 1987 had tried an illicit drug, and more than a third had tried illicit drugs other than marijuana. The use of alcohol remained fairly steady in 1987, and cigarette smoking – which the researchers say will take the lives of more young people than all other drugs combined – had not dropped among high school seniors since 1984.*

The question and the findings:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the public schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Use of drugs	32	34	30	29
Lack of discipline	19	20	15	25
Lack of proper financial support	12	10	17	11
Difficulty getting good teachers	11	10	11	13
Poor curriculum/poor standards	11	11	11	14
Parents' lack of interest	7	7	7	8
Moral standards	6	6	7	2
Large schools/ overcrowding	6	4	10	9
Pupils' lack of interest/ truancy	5	6	4	5

*For details of the University of Michigan's annual drug survey, contact Gil Goodwin, News and Information Service, University of Michigan, 412 Maynard, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1399. Ph. 313/747-1844.

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Drinking/alcoholism	5	5	5	6
Low teacher pay	4	3	7	5
Integration/busing	4	4	3	3
Teachers' lack of interest	3	3	3	8
Crime/vandalism	3	3	2	1
Lack of needed teachers	2	1	3	2
Lack of respect for teachers/other students	2	2	1	2
Fighting	1	2	1	1
Lack of proper facilities	1	1	3	3
Mismanagement of funds/programs	1	1	1	1
Problems with administration	1	1	1	1
Communication problems	1	1	1	*
Parents' involvement in school activities	1	1	1	*
Lack of after-school programs	1	*	1	1
Too many schools/ declining enrollment	1	*	1	*
School board politics	1	1	1	1
There are no problems	2	2	4	3
Miscellaneous	5	4	6	4
Don't know	10	12	4	5

*Less than one-half of 1%.
(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

Public Confidence in the Schools' Ability to Deal with Societal Problems

In order to measure levels of public confidence in the ability of the public schools to deal with four particularly troublesome societal problems, four questions were asked. In each case, the choices given were: a great deal of confidence, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all.

Among respondent groups, public school parents generally showed the most confidence in the public schools' ability to deal with these societal problems, particularly drug and alcohol abuse. None of the groups seemed to have much confidence in the schools' ability to handle the problem of teenage pregnancy.

Further demographic breakdowns revealed few significant differences. However, people living in communities with populations of less than 50,000 seemed to have more confidence in their schools' ability to deal with these problems than did people living in large cities. In addition, people with higher levels of education appeared to be *less confident* of their schools' ability to solve these problems than people with only a grade school or high school education.

The first question and the findings:

How much confidence do you have in your local public schools to deal with drug abuse?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A great deal	9	9	12	5
A fair amount	37	35	44	30
Not very much	35	35	31	43
None at all	12	12	12	19
Don't know	7	9	1	3

The second question and the findings:

How much confidence do you have in your local public schools to deal with alcohol abuse?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A great deal	10	9	15	8
A fair amount	33	34	34	25
Not very much	34	33	32	45
None at all	13	12	14	16
Don't know	10	12	5	6

The third question and the findings:

How much confidence do you have in your local public schools to deal with teenage pregnancy?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A great deal	5	5	6	4
A fair amount	30	29	33	24
Not very much	36	36	37	39
None at all	17	17	16	25
Don't know	12	13	8	8

The fourth question and the findings:

How much confidence do you have in your local public schools to deal with AIDS education?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A great deal	10	11	10	9
A fair amount	30	30	32	31
Not very much	27	26	28	29
None at all	14	12	17	17
Don't know	19	21	13	14

Combating the AIDS Epidemic

Because medical authorities generally believe that education offers the best hope of controlling the AIDS epidemic in America, the 1988 Gallup survey attempted to elicit the public's perception of the education-related issues raised by AIDS.

The public was virtually unanimous in its support for developing AIDS education programs in the public schools.

Ninety percent of the respondents thought that such programs should be developed, and only 5% thought that they should not.

Asked at what age children should begin participating in an AIDS education program, those who supported such a program generally thought that it should start before the age of puberty. Forty percent of the national sample would start it when children are between 5 and 9 years of age; another 40% would begin at age 10 to 12; only 11% would wait until children are 13 or older.

There was overwhelming support for teaching what is called "safe sex" as a means of preventing AIDS. (Presumably, most respondents understood this to be teaching the use of condoms.) Seventy-eight percent of the respondents approved teaching "safe sex," while only 16% opposed it.

Finally, respondents were asked whether they favored or opposed allowing children who suffer from AIDS to attend local public schools. Although the courts, with the backing of medical opinion, seemed to have settled this question in favor of allowing AIDS victims to attend school, the public still had misgivings. Although 57% favored allowing attendance, 24% opposed it, and 19% did not take a position.

The first question and the findings:

Do you believe that the local public schools should or should not develop an AIDS education program?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Should	90	88	94	95
Should not	5	6	4	4
Don't know	5	6	2	1

The second question and the findings (asked of those who favored having the local public schools develop an AIDS education program):

At what age should students begin participating in an AIDS education program?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Under 5 years	6	6	5	11
5-9 years	40	39	43	42
10-12 years	40	40	39	32
13-15 years	10	11	11	13
16 years or older	1	*	1	1
Don't know	3	4	1	1

*Less than one-half of 1%.

The third question and the findings:

Should the local public schools teach what is called "safe sex" for AIDS prevention, or should they not?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Should	78	77	81	82
Should not	16	16	16	15
Don't know	6	7	3	3

The fourth question and the findings:

Do you favor or oppose allowing children who suffer from AIDS to attend local public schools?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	57	57	57	57
Oppose	24	23	28	28
Don't know	19	20	15	15

Grading the Public Schools

The ratings people gave their local schools fluctuated very little from 1984 to 1988. Since the all-time low in 1983, when C, D, and F ratings overwhelmed A and B ratings (by 52% to 31%), people seemed to have regained a measure of confidence in their schools. A and B ratings leveled off at 40% or above, while C, D, and F ratings hovered around 45%.

One disturbing element in the ratings is the fact that people living in communities of 50,000 or more residents tended to give their public schools very low ratings. For example, in the 1988 survey only about 7% of large-city dwellers gave their public schools an A, whereas 12% of those living in smaller communities did so.

Once again, respondents had much more confidence in their local schools than in the public schools of the nation as a whole. Parents of students in the public schools, who should know more about the schools than other respondents, tended to be pleased with the quality of the local schools.

The first question and the findings:

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
A + B	40	37	51	33
A	9	8	13	8
B	31	29	38	25
C	34	34	36	37
D	10	10	8	21
FAIL	4	4	4	4
Don't know	12	15	1	5

Ratings Given the Local Public Schools

	1988 %	1987 %	1986 %	1985 %	1984 %	1983 %	1982 %	1981 %
A + B	40	43	41	43	42	31	37	36
A	9	12	11	9	10	6	8	9
B	31	31	30	34	32	25	29	27
C	34	30	28	30	35	32	33	34
D	10	9	11	10	11	13	14	13
FAIL	4	4	5	4	4	7	5	7
Don't know	12	14	15	13	8	17	11	10

Ratings Given the Local Public Schools

	1980 %	1979 %	1978 %	1977 %	1976 %	1975 %	1974 %
A + B	35	34	36	37	42	43	48
A	10	8	9	11	13	13	18
B	25	26	27	26	29	30	30
C	29	30	30	28	28	28	21
D	12	11	11	11	10	9	6
FAIL	6	7	8	5	6	7	5
Don't know	18	18	15	19	14	13	20

The second question and the findings:

How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A + B	23	21	25	18
A	3	2	3	2
B	20	19	22	16
C	48	46	52	57
D	13	13	12	16
FAIL	3	4	2	2
Don't know	13	16	9	7

Once again, the 1988 Gallup survey showed that, in general, parents of public school children have a higher opinion of the specific schools their children attend than of "local" or "national" public schools in general.

The third question and the findings:

Using the A, B, C, D, FAIL scale again, what grade would you give the school your oldest child attends?

	1988 %	1987 %	1986 %	1985 %
A + B	70	69	65	71
A	22	28	28	23
B	48	41	37	48
C	22	20	26	19
D	3	5	4	5
FAIL	2	2	2	2
Don't know	3	4	3	3

School Programs for Latch-Key Children

Three questions in the 1988 survey addressed the growing problem of "latch-key children" – those whose parents do not return home until late in the day. The public overwhelmingly approved (70% in favor, 23% opposed) public school programs that would provide before- and after-school care for these children. (The question did not ask whether instruction should be provided.) Of those who favored such programs, 49% believed that parents should pay for them, while 34% thought that tax money should be used. The respondents were equally divided (46% for, 45% against) regarding daylong summer programs in the public schools for latch-key children.

The demographic breakdowns show some interesting, though small, differences among groups on the idea of school programs for latch-key children. These differences suggest that policy makers considering programs for latch-key children would to well to sample opinion in their own communities. More women than men favored the idea (73% to 66%), more nonwhites than whites favored the idea (73% to 69%), and more younger people (ages 18-29, 78%; ages 30-49, 76%) than older people (age 50 and over, 58%) favored the idea. Household income also seems to have been related to opinion on the question; affluent respondents favored these programs somewhat more than did lower-income respondents.

The first question and the findings:

Would you favor or oppose the local public schools offering before-school and after-school programs where needed for so-called latch-key children, that is, those whose parents do not return home until late in the day?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	70	67	77	76
Oppose	23	25	19	19
Don't know	7	8	4	5

Further breakdowns:

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**70**	**23**	**7**
Sex			
Men	66	27	7
Women	73	20	7
Race			
White	69	25	6
Nonwhite	73	13	14
Age			
18 to 29 years	78	15	7
30 to 49 years	76	20	4
50 years and over	58	32	10
Community size			
1 million and over	77	16	7
500,000 — 999,999	74	16	10
50,000 — 499,999	72	23	5
2,500 — 49,999	65	30	5
Under 2,500	60	32	8

	Favor	Oppose	Don't Know/ No Answer
	%	%	%
Education			
College	76	20	4
Graduate	76	22	2
Incomplete	76	18	6
High school	67	24	9
Graduate	70	23	7
Incomplete	62	24	14
Grade school	53	37	10
Region			
East	72	20	8
Midwest	71	24	5
South	65	26	9
West	74	22	4
Income			
$40,000 and over	76	21	3
$30,000 - $39,999	76	20	4
$20,000 - $29,999	72	22	6
$10,000 - $19,999	64	27	9
Under $10,000	64	24	12

The second question (asked of those who favored school programs for latch-key children):

Do you think school-operated programs for latch-key children should be paid for by parents or with school taxes?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Parents	49	48	51	50
School taxes	34	33	35	35
Other (volunteered)	6	7	5	4
Neither (volunteered)	1	1	1	1
Don't know	10	11	8	10

The third question and the findings:

Do you think the local schools should conduct daylong programs for latch-key children in the summer, or should they not?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Should	46	46	44	53
Should not	45	44	51	44
Don't know	9	10	5	3

Higher Taxes for School Improvement

The 1988 Gallup survey revealed a statistically significant increase in public willingness to pay more taxes to help raise the standards of education in the U.S. since the same question was first asked in 1983. In 1988, 64% of respondents said they were willing to pay more taxes for this purpose; 29% were opposed. Comparable figures for 1983 were 58% in favor and 33% opposed. This willingness to pay for better education characterized every demographic and regional group of respondents. It is interesting to note that the group that most strongly favored raising taxes in order to raise educational standards (75% in favor) was the group with household incomes of $40,000 or more.

The question and the findings:

Would you be willing to pay more taxes to help raise the standards of education in the United States?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	64	61	73	68
No	29	31	23	30
Don't know	7	8	4	2

	National Totals	
	1988	1983
	%	%
Yes	64	58
No	29	33
Don't know	7	9

Spending More for the Slow and the Gifted

Since 1982, poll respondents were asked three times how they feel about special programs for two groups of students: children with learning problems and children who are especially gifted or talented. No particular trends in public opinion are apparent across the three polls.

As a nation, we were still divided on the question of spending more money to help children with learning problems: 48% would spend more on children with learning problems than we spend on average children; 45% would spend the same amount. There was considerable opposition to spending more for the education of the gifted and talented than we spend for the education of average children: only 25% would spend more for gifted children than for average children, while 63% would spend about the same amount, and 7% would spend less. Public school parents, nonpublic school parents, and people with no children in the schools tended to agree on this point.

The first question and the findings:

How do you feel about the spending of public school funds for special instruction and homework programs for students with *learning problems*? Do you feel that more public school funds should be spent on students with learning problems than on average students — or about the same amount?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Spend more	48	48	48	44
Spend same amount	45	44	47	46
Spend less	2	3	2	6
Don't know	5	5	3	4

	National Totals		
	1988	1985	1982
	%	%	%
Spend more	48	51	42
Spend same amount	45	40	48
Spend less	2	2	4
Don't know	5	7	6

The second question and the findings:

How do you feel about the spending of public school funds for special instruction and homework programs for *gifted* and *talented students*? Do you feel that more public school funds should be spent on gifted and talented students than on the average students — or about the same amount?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Spend more	25	24	27	24
Spend same amount	63	63	65	66
Spend less	7	7	6	6
Don't know	5	6	2	4

	National Totals		
	1988	1985	1982
	%	%	%
Spend more	25	30	19
Spend same amount	63	58	64
Spend less	7	5	11
Don't know	5	7	6

Attitudes Toward Racial Integration

Three questions on racial integration of the public schools (two were asked in 1971, the other in 1973) were repeated for the first time in the 1988 poll. The responses showed that public attitudes in 1988 were significantly more liberal.

A majority of the respondents (55%) felt that school integration had improved the quality of education for black students. In 1971 only 43% thought so. There also appeared to be a move toward the belief that racial integration helped the quality of education received by white students. Only 23% believed this in 1971; in 1988, 35% said that they believed this.

Thirty-four years after the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed segregation, racial integration of the schools was still incomplete. Gallup interviewers asked in 1973 whether more or less should be done to integrate the schools. In that year, more people thought less should be done (38%) than thought more should be done (30%). In 1988 the reverse was true. Thirty-seven percent of people said more should be done; 23% said less. (Thirty-one percent liked the status quo.)

Demographic breakdowns of data from the 1988 poll showed that nonwhites were still greatly dissatisfied with the pace of integration. Sixty-one percent of nonwhites said that more should be done; only 10% said less. Comparable figures among whites were 33% and 25%. Nonwhites also were more likely than whites to believe that racial integration had improved the quality of education for both blacks and whites.

The first question and the findings:

How do you feel about school integration? Do you feel it has improved the quality of education received by black students?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	55	55	57	50
No	29	28	31	34
Don't know	16	17	12	16

	National Totals	
	1988	1971
	%	%
Yes	55	43
No	29	31
Don't know	16	26

The second question and the findings:

How do you feel about school integration? Do you feel it has improved the quality of education received by white students?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	35	35	37	36
No	47	46	47	48
Don't know	18	19	16	16

	National Totals	
	1988	1971
	%	%
Yes	35	23
No	47	51
Don't know	18	26

The third question and the findings:

Do you believe that more should be done — or that less should be done — to integrate schools throughout the nation?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
More	37	38	36	30
Less	23	22	24	26
No change	31	30	34	33
Don't know	9	10	6	11

	National Totals	
	1988	1973
	%	%
More	37	30
Less	23	38
No change	31	23
Don't know	9	9

Bilingual Instruction

Political support for bilingual education in the U.S. was on the decline, and public support was uncertain. The 1988 survey asked whether people favored or opposed instruction in a student's native language in the public schools.

The question and the findings:

Would you favor or oppose the local public schools' providing instruction in a student's native language, whatever it is, in order to help him or her become a more successful learner?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	42	41	45	42
Oppose	49	49	48	48
Don't know	9	10	7	10

Rewarding Schools for Improving Achievement of Minorities

A majority of the public favored rewarding schools financially if they demonstrate that they can improve the academic achievement of minority students. Support for this idea was particularly high among nonwhites (72%) and among residents of the largest cities (61%).

The question and the findings:

Do you favor or oppose encouraging legislatures, school boards, and other governing bodies to provide special financial rewards to schools that demonstrate that they can increase academic achievement among minorities as measured by standardized tests?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	53	52	54	59
Oppose	34	34	37	30
Don't know	13	14	9	11

Year-Round School

A shortage of schoolrooms was beginning to reappear in some sections of the country, as children of baby-boomers of the Fifties swelled enrollments. In response, the notion of keeping schools open all year in order to make the best use of existing facilities had been revived from the early Seventies – with similar results. More Americans disapproved than approved of the idea of year-round schools, as was also the case in 1970.

The question and the findings:

To utilize school buildings to the full extent, would you favor keeping the schools open year around? Parents could choose which three of the four quarters of the year their children could attend. Do you approve or disapprove of this idea?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Approve	40	40	40	40
Disapprove	53	52	55	53
Don't know	7	8	5	7

	National Totals		
	1988	1972	1970
	%	%	%
Approve	40	53	42
Disapprove	53	41	49
Don't know	7	6	9

Public Support for Reduced Class Size

The general public was convinced, as educational researchers were not, that reducing class size from as many as 35 to 20 would greatly improve student achievement. (Some of the best research shows that only a reduction *below* 20 students per class would, in most cases, make a significant difference.*)

The question and the findings:

In some school districts, the typical class has as many as 35 students; in other districts, only 20. In regard to the achievement or progress of students, do you think small classes make a great deal of difference, little difference, or no difference at all?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Great deal of difference	71	68	77	83
Little difference	21	22	17	11
No difference	6	7	5	5
Don't know	2	3	1	1

National Exam for High School Graduation

Most respondents to the 1988 poll were convinced that U.S. high school students should be required to pass a standard nationwide examination in order to receive a high school diploma. When the question was first asked by the Gallup Organization in 1958, 50% held this belief, and 39% disagreed. In 1988, 73% approved of such an exam, and only 22% disapproved.

The question and the findings:

Should all high school students in the U.S. be required to pass a standard nationwide examination in order to get a high school diploma?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	73	73	73	78
No	22	22	24	21
Don't know	5	5	3	1

	National Totals				
	1988	1984	1981	1976	1958
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	73	65	69	65	50
No	22	29	26	31	39
Don't know	5	6	5	4	11

*See Gene V Glass, "On Criticism of Our Class Size/Student Achievement Research: No Points Conceded," *Phi Delta Kappan*, December 1980, pp. 242-44.

National Tests for Comparing Schools

Ever since 1970 people have favored national tests to permit comparisons of student achievement in their local schools with achievement in other schools. The sentiment for such tests seemed to be a little stronger in 1988 than in earlier years.

The question and the findings:

Would you like to see students in the local schools given national tests so that their educational achievement could be compared with students in other communities?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	81	81	82	82
No	14	14	14	16
Don't know	5	5	4	2

	National Totals				
	1988	1986	1983	1971	1970
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	81	77	75	70	75
No	14	16	17	21	16
Don't know	5	7	8	9	9

The Home-School Movement

In recent years the so-called "home-school movement" has received considerable media attention, although the number of students being schooled at home in the U.S. is not significant. A majority of the public in 1988 believed that people should have the legal right to educate their children at home, but they rejected, by about a 2 to 1 margin, the idea that home-schooling is a good thing for the nation. However, fewer disapproved of home-schooling in 1988 than in 1985. People also believed that a home-school should be required to meet the same teacher certification standards as a public school.

The first question:

Recently there has been a movement toward home-schools, that is, situations in which parents keep their children at home to teach the children themselves. In general do you think that this movement is a good thing or a bad thing for the nation?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Good thing	28	27	29	29
Bad thing	59	59	61	56
Don't know	13	14	10	15

	National Totals	
	1988	1985
	%	%
Good thing	28	16
Bad thing	59	73
Don't know	13	11

The second question and the findings:

Do you think that parents should or should not have the legal right to educate their children at home?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Should	53	51	57	56
Should not	39	40	37	38
Don't know	8	9	6	6

The third question and the findings:

Do you think that the home-schools should or should not be required to meet the same teacher certification standards as the public schools?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Should	82	81	84	80
Should not	12	12	12	16
Don't know	6	7	4	4

Discipline Through Physical Punishment

As it has been for generations, corporal punishment in school for disciplinary reasons was a controversial issue in 1988. Only a slight majority of respondents said they approved of physical punishment (50% for, 45% against). Since 1970 the opposition to physical punishment had gained considerable ground. In that year, when the question was first asked in this poll, 62% approved of physical punishment, and 33% disapproved of it.

The question and the findings:

Spanking and similar forms of physical punishment are permitted in the lower grades of some schools for children who do not respond well to other forms of discipline. Do you approve or disapprove of this practice?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Approve	50	51	49	46
Disapprove	45	44	48	50
Don't know	5	5	3	4

Parent Participation in School Affairs

Critics of the schools continually call for more participation by parents. In 1988, for the first time, the Gallup survey asked public school parents how much effort the schools made to involve them in school affairs. Only 25% of parents believed that the schools put forth a "great deal of effort" to involve parents.

The question and the findings:

To what degree do the local public schools attempt to attract participation by parents in school affairs? A great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?

	Public School Parents
	%
A great deal	25
A fair amount	49
Not very much	20
None at all	2
Don't know	4

Have the Schools Been Improving?

Two questions asked in the 1988 poll (both also asked in earlier polls) revealed that two-thirds of the respondents believed that the schools are the same or better than they were five years ago and that almost half of the respondents believed that children now get a better education than they themselves got. The differences were not large, but they nonetheless argue against the presumption that schools were better in the "good old days."

It should be noted, however, that people in communities of more than one million residents generally believed that their schools are worse today than they were five years ago. This is not true of any other demographic group.

The first question and the findings:

Would you say that the public schools in this community have improved from, say, five years ago, gotten worse, or stayed about the same?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents	1987 National Totals
	%	%	%	%	%
Improved	29	25	39	36	25
Gotten worse	19	19	16	25	22
Stayed about the same	37	38	36	26	36
Don't know	15	18	9	13	17

The second question and the findings:

As you look back on your own elementary and high school education, is it your impression that children today get a better — or worse — education than you did?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Better	48	44	58	54
Worse	35	37	31	38
No difference	11	12	9	6
Don't know	6	7	2	2

	National Totals		
	1988	1979	1973
	%	%	%
Better	48	41	61
Worse	35	42	20
No difference	11	9	11
Don't know	6	8	8

Sources of the Public's Information About Schools

It is useful for policy makers to know what sources of information people depend on when they judge the quality of the schools in their community. Although educators have never given newspapers high grades for coverage of education news (it is alleged that newspapers tend to accentuate the negative), people in 1988 said that newspapers are their chief source of information about the schools. This was not true when a similar question on information sources was first asked in the Gallup survey in 1973.

It should be noted that, since 1973, the percentage of adults in the U.S. with school-age children dwindled from 39% to about 27%. This probably explains the lower percentage of the public that depended in 1988 on students as a source of information.

The question and the findings:

What are the sources of information you use to judge the quality of schools in your community; that is, where do you get your information about the schools?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Newspapers	52	55	45	54
Students	36	29	57	41
Parents of students	33	29	41	42
Radio and/or television	32	36	22	24
Other adults in community	28	28	26	27
School board/faculty members	25	18	43	39
Other	13	12	16	12
Don't know	3	4	2	3

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

	National Totals		
	1988	1983	1973
	%	%	%
Newspapers	52	42	38
Students	36	36	43
Parents of students	33	29	33
Radio and/or television	32	19	20
Other adults in community	28	27	23
School board/faculty members	25	24	33
Other	13	4	12
Don't know	3	7	4

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

The Teaching Profession

In the 1988 survey, three trend questions and three entirely new ones were asked in order to assess opinion about policies that affect the supply and quality of teachers.

First, parents were asked if they would like their child to take up teaching as a career. This was the sixth time this question had been asked, so that opinion trends can be

traced over a 20-year period. The answers were no doubt influenced by a combination of factors, notably teacher supply, the status accorded teaching in the U.S., and the income one can expect from teaching. In 1969 and 1972, when teacher shortages were common, 75% and 67% of parents answered this question affirmatively, and enrollments in teacher education institutions were high.

By the end of the Seventies, public school enrollments were down, and the nation found itself oversupplied with teachers. The 1980, 1981, and 1983 polls showed less than half of the parents favoring teaching careers for their children. In 1988 shortages were reappearing and teacher salaries were improving; the 1988 poll showed an apparent resurgence of parents' interest in teaching as a career for their offspring.

The question and the findings:

Would you like to have a child of yours take up teaching in the public schools as a career?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	58	56	62	53
No	31	31	30	37
Don't know	11	13	8	10

	National Totals					
	1988	1983	1981	1980	1972	1969
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	58	45	46	48	67	75
No	31	33	43	40	22	15
Don't know	11	22	11	12	11	10

Questions of Teacher Quality

The public in general saw a need to attract more capable students into the teaching profession. The same concern for quality was apparent in responses to questions dealing with ways to insure teacher competence. The data in the following tables speak eloquently on this subject.

Of particular interest to educators is the response to a question asking whether the public favors increased pay for teachers who "have proved themselves particularly capable." The vast majority (84%) said yes. A question in the 1984 survey attempted to measure opinion on the same issue but used the term *merit* pay. There was somewhat less unanimity in the public's response to that question. Of those who had heard or read about merit pay for teachers, 76% favored it and 19% opposed it in the 1984 survey. In the total 1984 sample, 65% favored and 22% opposed the idea of merit pay for teachers.

The first question and the findings:

Do you think the public schools need to attract more capable students into the teaching profession, or not?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	89	89	90	88
No	7	7	8	9
Don't know	4	4	2	3

The second question and the findings:

In your opinion, should experienced teachers be periodically required to pass a statewide basic competency test in their subject area or areas, or not?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents	1986 National Totals
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	86	84	89	86	85
No	11	11	10	12	11
Don't know	3	5	1	2	4

The third question and the findings:

Would you favor or oppose the idea of establishing a national set of standards for the certification of public school teachers?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	86	85	89	85
Oppose	9	9	8	13
Don't know	5	6	3	2

The fourth question and the findings:

Do you favor or oppose an increased pay scale for those teachers who have proved themselves particularly capable?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	84	84	86	88
Oppose	11	11	11	8
Don't know	5	5	3	4

The fifth question and the findings:

Teachers now receive certificates to teach upon completion of their college coursework. Some people believe that teachers should be required to spend one year as interns in the schools at half pay before they are given certificates to teach. Do you think this is a good idea or a poor idea?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents	1980 National Totals
	%	%	%	%	%
Good idea	51	51	51	50	56
Poor idea	41	40	42	46	36
Don't know	8	9	7	4	8

Censoring Student Publications

The U.S. Supreme Court, in the *Hazelwood School District* v. *Kuhlmeier* decision, ruled that "educators do not offend the First Amendment by exercising editorial control over the style and content of student speech in school-sponsored expressive activities so long as their actions are reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns." While the decision did not overturn the famous *Tinker* decision of 1969, whose main point was that students do not leave their constitutional rights outside the schoolhouse door, it did seem to give educators more authority. The public generally approved of the *Kuhlmeier* decision.

The question and the findings:

The U.S. Supreme Court recently ruled in favor of more authority for high school principals to censor school-sponsored student publications. Do you believe that this was a good ruling or a bad ruling?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Good ruling	59	59	59	64
Bad ruling	28	28	31	24
Don't know	13	13	10	12

A Reassuring Conclusion

On four occasions, Gallup interviewers have asked respondents to assess factors that will determine America's future strength. In each case they have overwhelmingly pointed to a good education system as the main source of the nation's future strength. The following figures speak for themselves.

The question and the findings:

In determining America's strength in the future, say, 25 years from now, how important do you feel each of the following factors will be — very important, fairly important, not too important, or not at all important?

	Very Important %	Fairly Important %	Not Too Important %	Not At All Important %	Don't Know %
Developing the best educational system in the world	88	9	1	1	1
Developing the most efficient industrial production system in the world	65	28	3	1	3
Building the strongest military force in the world	47	35	12	4	2

	Those responding "very important" 1988 %	1984 %	1982 %
Developing the best educational system in the world	88	82	84
Developing the most efficient industrial production system in the world	65	70	66
Building the strongest military force in the world	47	45	47

Appendix I
Sampling and Research Procedures

The Sample

The sample used in the 20 education surveys the Gallup Organization has made since 1969 has consisted of between 1,505 and 2,118 adults in the United States. In the first three polls these adults were 21 years of age or older; since 1971, because of the 26th Amendment to the Constitution, which gave the vote to 18-year-olds, persons age 18 or over have been included. In three polls (1970, 1971, and 1974) additional samples of 250 to 299 high school juniors and seniors also were interviewed. Their responses were reported separately from those of the regular samples. In two polls additional samples consisting of educators were drawn, 270 in 1972 and 306 in 1973, and their responses were reported separately.

Personal, in-house interviewing is conducted in all areas of the nation and in all types of communities. Composition of a typical sample is shown below.

Time of Interviewing

The fieldwork for most of the surveys has been carried out in mid- to late April. In a few instances, the interviewing was done in May.

The Reports

In the tables provided with each survey report, the heading "Nonpublic School Parents" includes parents of students who attend parochial schools and parents of students who attend private or independent schools. Some parents have one or more children attending a public school and one or more attending a nonpublic school. In these cases, their responses are counted in each category.

Due allowance must be made for statistical variation, especially in the case of findings for groups consisting of relatively few respondents, for example, nonpublic school parents. In 1988 the Gallup Organization increased sample size by approximately 600 in order to be more confident that the parent samples were representative of the total population of parents in the U.S.

Composition of the Sample

In order to make a number of demographic comparisons possible, Gallup interviewers report a great deal of information about each respondent in addition to responses to education-related questions. This information includes region of the country and size of community in which the respondent lives, sex, race (white or nonwhite), occupation, education, age, religion, income, and political affiliation. (Sometimes religion and political affiliation have not been reported.)

Comparisons of these data for the 20-year history of the poll yields some significant demographic changes. The most striking has been in the percentage of respondents with children in public school. Starting from a high of 44% in 1969, the number of parents with children in public school dwindled gradually until reaching an average of about 28% for the past 11 years. In 1987 it went up to 31%, as children of the so-called baby-boom generation – people born in the Fifties – began to build up elementary enrollments.

The percentage of respondents with children in nonpublic schools has been fairly constant – generally 5% to 8%.

The percentage of nonwhites included in the sample has grown slightly over the years, from 9% in the early polls to between 12% and 14% in recent years.

Occupational distributions have remained fairly constant. However, farmer respondents dwindled in number from 5% in 1969 to 3% in recent years, and the "clerical and sales" category dropped from between 10% and 11% in the 1969-1976 period to between 6% and 9% in 1982-1988.

There has been a marked increase in the number of years of formal education received by respondents. From a high of 25% in 1970, that portion of the sample composed of persons with only an elementary education dropped to a low of 7% in 1988. From a low of 27% in 1969, the portion of the sample composed of persons with a college degree or some college education rose to 45% in 1988.

No particular changes in the age of respondents are apparent. But when persons age 18 to 21 were first interviewed in 1972, this group made up as much as 20% of the sample.

There have been only minor changes in regional distribution of respondents from poll to poll, although the percentage of respondents in the South and West has grown somewhat, while the percent in the East has dropped slightly.

Since income figures have not been adjusted for inflation, there have been notable changes in income categories. In fact, the categories themselves have changed to reflect incomes that are today more than three times those of 1969.

In 1969, 43% of the respondents lived in communities of 2,500 or fewer. By 1973 this percentage had dropped to 27%, which is about the current level. No other trends are discernible in the community size category.

Religious and political affiliations of poll respondents have not been consistently reported, but figures are recorded to make sure the sample agrees with U.S. Census data.

The following table shows the composition of the sample of 2,118 adults interviewed for the 1988 survey.

Composition of the Sample

Adults	%
No children in school	70
Public school parents	27*
Nonpublic school parents	8*

*Total exceeds 30% because some parents have children attending more than one kind of school.

Sex	%
Men	48
Women	52

Race	%
White	86
Nonwhite	14

Age	%
18-29 years	24
30-49 years	39
50 and over	37

Occupation (Chief Wage Earner)	%
Business and professional	28
Clerical and sales	8
Manual labor	38
Nonlabor force	19
Farm	1
Undesignated	6

Income	%
$40,000 and over	21
$30,000-$39,999	16
$20,000-$29,999	17
$10,000-$19,999	27
Under $10,000	14
Undesignated	5

Region	%
East	24
Midwest	25
South	31
West	20

Community Size	%
1 million and over	35
500,000-999,999	8
50,000-499,999	18
2,500-49,999	11
Under 2,500	28

Education	%
College	45
High school	48
Grade school	7

Design of the Sample

The sampling procedure is designed to produce an approximation of the adult civilian population, age 18 and older (since 1972), except for persons in institutions such as prisons or hospitals.

A replicated probability sample is used, down to the block level in urban areas and down to segments of townships in rural areas. More than 300 sample locations are used in each survey.

The sample design currently includes stratification by these seven size-of-community strata, using 1980 census data:

1) incorporated cities of population 1,000,000 and over,
2) incorporated cities of population 250,000 to 999,999,
3) incorporated cities of population 50,000 to 249,999,
4) urbanized places not included in 1 and 2,
5) cities over 2,500 population outside of urbanized areas,
6) towns and villages with populations less than 2,500, and
7) rural places not included within town boundraries.

Each of these strata is further stratified into four geographic regions: East, Midwest, South, and West. Within each city-size/regional stratum, the population is arrayed in geographic order and zoned into equal-sized groups of sampling units. Pairs of localities are selected in each zone, with probability of selection of each locality proportional to its population size in the 1980 census, producing two replicated samples of localities.

Separately for each survey, within each subdivision for which block statistics are available, a sample of blocks or block clusters is drawn with probability of selection proportional to the number of dwelling units. In all other subdivisions or areas, blocks or segments are drawn at random or with equal probability.

In each cluster of blocks and each segment, a randomly selected starting point is designated on the interviewer's map of the area. Starting at this point, interviewers are required to follow a given direction in the selection of households until their assignments are completed.

Interviewing is conducted at times when adults, in general, are most likely to be at home, which means on weekends or, if on weekdays, after 4 p.m. for women and after 6 p.m. for men.

Allowance for persons not at home is made by a "times-at-home" weighting procedure rather than by "callbacks." This procedure is a standard method for reducing the sample bias that would otherwise result from under-representation in the sample of persons who are difficult to find at home.

The prestratification by regions is routinely supplemented by fitting each obtained sample to the latest available Census Bureau estimates of the regional distribution of the population. Also, minor adjustments of the sample are made by educational attainment by men and women separately,

based on the annual estimates by the Census Bureau (derived from its Current Population Survey) and by age.

Sampling Tolerances

In interpreting survey results, it should be borne in mind that all sample surveys are subject to sampling error, that is, the extent to which the results may differ from what would be obtained if the whole population surveyed had been interviewed. The size of such sampling errors depends largely on the number of interviews.

The following tables may be used in estimating the sampling error of any percentage in the reports included in this anthology. The computed allowances have taken into account the effect of the sample design on sampling error. They may be interpreted as indicating the range (plus or minus the figure shown) within which the results of repeated samplings in the same time period could be expected to vary 95% of the time, assuming the same sampling procedure, the same interviewers, and the same questionnaire.

The first table shows how much allowance should be made for the sampling error of a percentage:

Recommended Allowance for Sampling Error of a Percentage

	In Percentage Points (at 95 in 100 confidence level)* Sample Size						
Size of Sample	**1,500**	**1,000**	**750**	**600**	**400**	**200**	**100**
Percentages near 10	2	2	3	3	4	5	8
Percentages near 20	3	3	4	4	5	7	10
Percentages near 30	3	4	4	5	6	8	12
Percentages near 40	3	4	5	5	6	9	12
Percentages near 50	3	4	5	5	6	9	13
Percentages near 60	3	4	5	5	6	9	12
Percentages near 70	3	4	4	5	6	8	12
Percentages near 80	3	3	4	4	5	7	10
Percentages near 90	2	2	3	3	4	5	8

*The chances are 95 in 100 that the sampling error is not larger than the figures shown.

The table would be used in the following manner: Let us say that a reported percentage is 33 for a group that includes 1,000 respondents. We go to the row for "percentages near 30" in the table and across to the column headed "1,000."

The number at this point is 4, which means that the 33% obtained in the sample is subject to a sampling error of plus or minur four points. In other words, it is very probable (95 chances out of 100) that the true figure would be somewhere between 29% and 37%, with the most likely figure the 33% obtained.

In comparing survey results in two samples, such as, for example, men and women, the question arises as to how large a difference between them must be before one can be reasonably sure that it reflects a real difference. In the tables below, the number of points that must be allowed for in such comparisons is indicated.

Two tables are provided. One is for percentages near 20 or 80; the other, for percentages near 50. For percentages in between, the error to be allowed for lies between those shown in the two tables.

Recommended Allowance for Sampling Error of the Difference

TABLE A	In Percentage Points (at 95 in 100 confidence level)* Percentages near 20 or percentages near 80					
Size of Sample	**1,500**	**1,000**	**750**	**600**	**400**	**200**
1,500	4					
1,000	4	5				
750	5	5	5			
600	5	5	6	6		
400	6	6	6	7	7	
200	8	8	8	8	9	10

TABLE B	Percentages near 50					
Size of Sample	**1,500**	**1,000**	**750**	**600**	**400**	**200**
1,500	5					
1,000	5	6				
750	6	6	7			
600	6	7	7	7		
400	7	8	8	8	9	
200	10	10	10	10	11	13

*The chances are 95 in 100 that the sampling error is not larger than the figures shown.

Here is an example of how the tables would be used: Let us say that 50% of men respond a certain way and 40% of women respond that way also, for a difference of 10 percentage points between them. Can we say with any assurance that the 10-point difference reflects a real difference between men and women on the question? Let us consider a sample that contains approximately 750 men and 750 women.

Since the percentages are near 50, we consult Table B; and since the two samples are about 750 persons each, we look for the number in the column headed "750," which is also in the row designated "750." We find the number 7 here. This means that the allowance for error should be seven points, and that, in concluding that the percentage among men is somewhere between three and 17 points higher than the percentage among women, we should be wrong only about 5% of the time. In other words, we can conclude with considerable confidence that a difference exists in the direction observed and that it amount to at least three percentage points.

If, in another case, men's responses amount to 22%, say, and women's to 24%, we consult Table A, because these percentages are near 20. We look in the column headed "750" and see that the number is 5. Obviously then, the two-point difference is inconclusive.

Appendix II
Polling Attitudes of Community on Education (PACE)

Each year following the publication of the Gallup Poll on the Public's Attitudes Toward Public Schools, Phi Delta Kappa receives numerous requests to assist school districts in replicating the poll, either in part or in full, at the local level. Not all requests focus on the Gallup Poll. Some come from professional educators who wish to conduct a variety of surveys and need guidance. To meet this need, the PDK Dissemination Center in collaboration with the Gallup Organization developed the *Polling Attitudes of Community on Education (PACE)* program in 1980. Since that time the program has undergone three revisions to keep in step with changing techniques in opinion polling.

PACE is a training manual that the late Dr. George Gallup Sr. described as "unique – the first time anyone has put together, in one package, complete instructions for the nonspecialist on how to conduct scientific polls of attitude and opinion on education." The *PACE* manual describes in detail every aspect of designing, implementing, and evaluating public opinion polls. The manual includes chapters on:

- constructing the questionnaire
- classifying the questions used in the last 20 annual Gallup education polls
- selecting the sample
- training interviewers
- analyzing the data

In addition to the *PACE* manual, *PACE* materials include two handbooks for interviewers, one for face-to-face interviews and one for telephone surveys. There is also a 55-minute videotape focusing on appropriate and inappropriate techniques for conducting a personal interview.

Although the *PACE* program is regarded as self-instructional, the PDK Dissemination Center will consult with *PACE* users according to their needs. As an example, where users have difficulty in analyzing their data, the Center can provide SCAN-TRON scoring of results. Persons interested in using *PACE* materials should write Neville Robertson at Phi Delta Kappa, Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402-0789, or telephone (812) 339-1156. The costs of materials are:

- PACE manual, $39.50
- *A Decade of Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education: 1969-1978*, $5.50
- Handbooks for interviewers, $3.00 each
- Personal interview videotape 1/2" VHS, $40

Since 1980, *PACE* materials have been used by school districts throughout the country. The largest study, however, was that carried out by the Maryland State Department of Education in 1984. Every school district was surveyed, and this allowed for comparisons at three levels: local, state, and national. Inquiries regarding this study should be directed to the Maryland State Department of Education, 200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201.

Appendix III
Differences Between Educators and the Public on Questions of Educational Policy

(Published in the December 1987 *Phi Delta Kappan*)

The opinions of professional educators, as represented by a sample of the membership of Phi Delta Kappa, differ from those of the general public on a number of important education policy questions and related matters. These differences will be a continuing source of friction between the education community and the public it serves, unless and until means can be found for reconciling them. At the very least, the differences suggest an agenda for the public relations arm of the education profession.

These are among the conclusions that stem from an examination of responses of PDK members to a poll conducted by mail last April.* The poll questions were the same as those asked by Gallup Organization interviewers for the annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools. The public's responses to these questions were reported in the September 1987 *Kappan* by Alec Gallup and David Clark under the title, "The 19th Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools."

The major opinion differences uncovered between the general public and professional educators included the following.

- Asked to identify the biggest problems in their local schools, the general public most often mentioned abuse of drugs (30%), lack of discipline (22%), and lack of proper financial support (14%). In the eyes of professional educators, the top problems in their local schools were inadequate finances (60%); student behavioral problems (54.5%), including drug abuse (14%); and parents' lack of interest (18%).
- Nearly twice as many professional educators as members of the general public (48% to 27%) reported that their local public schools have improved over the past five years.
- Professional educators tended to give the public schools in their communities higher grades than did the public. For example, 43% of the general public awarded their local schools a grade of A or B, as did 56% of the parents of public school children and 69% of professional educators.*
- Professional educators did not seem convinced, as the public definitely was, of the value of reporting the results of student achievement tests on a state-by-state and school-by-school basis in order to compare schools of similar size and of similar racial and economic makeup. The public favored the idea (70% for and 14% against), whereas professional educators were equally divided (47% for and 47% against).
- Professional educators opposed the voucher system (74% to 21.5%), whereas the public was about equally divided (44% for and 41% against). A majority of both the public and professional educators believed vouchers would hurt the public schools in their communities, but professional educators were much more certain of this.
- Like the public, professional educators tended to oppose a strong decision-making role for the federal government in public education. However, nearly twice as many professional educators as members of the public (68% to 37%) said that they would maintain the existing federal Department of Education instead of giving its functions to a smaller agency or to other departments.
- Fewer than half as many professional educators as members of the public (31% to 68%) favored an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow organized prayer in the public schools.
- The public was considerably more inclined than professional educators to favor giving parents more say about the public school curriculum, books, and instructional materials.

Specific differences on curriculum matters were revealed by several questions. For example:

- While 43% of the public thought that courses on values and ethical behavior should be taught in public schools, only 21% of professional educators agreed. Professionals were much more likely than members of the public (43% to 13%) to consider moral education a joint responsibility of schools, parents, and churches.
- Far more professional educators than members of the public would require health education, physical education,

*A randomly selected sample of the approximately 123,000 Phi Delta Kappans living in the United States was asked to complete and return a questionnaire. Of the 1,800 mailed, 730 questionnaires were returned by May 15, 1987, the deadline given. This is a response rate of 41%. No effort was made to sample nonrespondents, because there was no evidence of persistent bias. The distribution of responses by sex, age, education, race, community size, state of residence, and primary occupation (among 19 categories) paralleled that of the general membership. There were also no significant differences between 58 responses received after the May 15 cutoff and those received earlier.

Copies of "A Study of the Opinions of Phi Delta Kappa Members on Gallup Education Poll Questions, 1987," a 32-page report prepared by the Indiana University Survey Research Center, can be obtained for $10 each by writing to Publications, Phi Delta Kappa, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402-0789. The price includes shipping.

*It should perhaps be noted that a disproportionately large number of Phi Delta Kappa members live in communities served by America's more fortunate schools.

foreign languages, music, and art for high school students who plan to go to college.

- Many more professional educators than members of the public favored sex education in the public schools, both secondary (professionals 93% for, public 76% for) and elementary (professionals 88% for, public 55% for).
- More professional educations than members of the public favored computer training for all high school students.

It would be easy to overemphasize the differences between professional and public opinion on education questions. Some of the differences are small or insignificant. For example:

- Both professionals and the public overwhelmingly believe that raising standards of academic achievement would help the quality of public schools in their communities.

	Professionals	Public
	%	%
Would improve quality	78	76
Would hurt quality	13	11
Don't know/no answer	9	13

- Professionals and the public agree that requiring more basics, such as math and science, thus reducing the number of elective courses students can take, would improve the quality of the public schools in their communities. (But note some differences in percentages.)

	Professionals	Public
	%	%
Would improve quality	65	75
Would hurt quality	26	11
Don't know/no answer	9	14

- Professionals and the public tend to agree on what divisions of government should have the greatest influence on improving local public schools, though the public seems to fear state and federal influence somewhat less than professionals do.

	Federal Government	
	Professionals	Public
	%	%
Favor more influence	24	37
Favor less influence	50	39
Favor same influence	23	14
Don't know/no answer	3	10

	State Government	
	Professionals	Public
	%	%
Favor more influence	41	55
Favor less influence	35	21
Favor same influence	23	15
Don't know/no answer	1	9

	Local Government	
	Professionals	Public
	%	%
Favor more influence	48	62
Favor less influence	23	15
Favor same influence	27	15
Don't know/no answer	2	8

- Professionals and the public agree that it would be possible to develop subject matter for character education courses that would be acceptable to most of the people in their communities; and these majorities tend to believe that, if students or their parents object to the courses, students should be excused from taking them.

	Professionals	Public
	%	%
Possible to develop acceptable courses	70	62
Not possible	22	23
Don't know/no answer	8	15

	Professionals	Public
	%	%
Yes, excuse objectors	64	52
No, don't excuse	26	37
Don't know/no answer	10	11

- With minor exceptions, the public and the profession agree on what the *core* courses should be for both college-bound and non-college-bound high school students.

	College-Bound	
	Professionals	Public
	%	%
Mathematics	92	94
English	99	91
History/U.S. government	99	84
Science	99	83
Foreign language	76	56

	Non-College-Bound	
	Professionals	Public
	%	%
Mathematics	98.5	88
English	98	85
History/U.S. government	97	69
Science	91	57
Foreign language	18.5	20

There are large areas of agreement – and some notable disagreements – on a question that attempted to find out what people think the federal government should do for American education.

Eleven services that the federal government has performed – sometimes vigorously, sometimes reluctantly – were

listed. Respondents were asked to indicate whether these were things they thought the federal government should do. The results are shown in Table 1.

Note the strong disagreement between professionals and the general public on whether the federal government should support a national testing program and on whether the federal government should require states and local schools to meet minimum educational standards.

Obviously, it is the areas of disagreement between the public and the profession that should most concern both groups. What accounts for the differences? Do they arise from public ignorance of the facts and the logic behind professional opinions? (Public respondents admitted to Gallup interviewers that they know little of some of the issues raised.) From public indifference? Is immediate self-interest more important to some educators than the success in school of their students? Are most of the differences of opinion reconcilable if both parties make the effort?

My purpose is presenting the data in this article is to raise these questions, not attempt to answer them. Educators in leadership positions should ponder the dilemmas they pose.

TABLE 1
Services That the Federal Government Should Perform

	Yes		No		Don't Know	
	Professionals %	Public %	Professionals %	Public %	Professionals %	Public %
Advise and encourage state and local education systems to deal with important national problems in education, such as literacy, poor math achievement, and the like	83	83	14	10	3 •	7
Identify important national problems in education, such as illiteracy, poor math achievement, and the like	81	81	15.5	12	4	7
Collect and report information and statistics that measure the performance of education in the nation	80	73	16	18	4	9
Fund research and development in areas of need, such as the curriculum and teaching methods	77.5	72	18.5	19	4	9
Fund programs to deal with important national problems in education, such as illiteracy, poor math achievement, and the like	73	78	22	15	5	7
Provide financing for scholarships and fellowships for college students	70	72	24	20	6	8
Provide recognition and awards for high achievement by students, teachers, and schools	68.5	76	27	17	5	7
Promote educational programs intended to help solve such social problems as poverty and unequal opportunities for minorities, women, and the handicapped	67	80	22	12	6	8
Require states and local school districts to meet minimum educational standards	53	84	43	10	4	6
Provide financial aid to the states through block grants that can be used for education or for any other purpose	50.5	57	43	30	6	13
Support a national testing program for public school students	31	74	63	17	6	9